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Inter

'Trust should have been registered'

Robinson was badly advised, says Downey

By James Landale and Polly Newton

Geoffrey Robinson was criticised by the Parliamentary Ombudsman last night for failing to declare an offshore trust in the Register of Members' Interests.

Both Sir Gordon Downey, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, and the MPs' Standards and Privileges Committee cleared the millionaire Paymaster General of breaking any Commons rules. But Sir Gordon said it would have been better for Mr Robinson to have registered his potential interest in the Guernsey-based Orion trust, of which he is a discretionary beneficiary. Sir Gordon said he would have recommended registration had his advice been sought.

He said it was a mistake for Mr Robinson to rely on professional advisers who said registration was not necessary. The committee agreed that it would be better for interests of this nature to be registered and said MPs in doubt should seek his advice.

The Conservatives said it was clear that Mr Robinson should have registered the trust and repeated their call for him to resign. Peter Lilley, the Shadow Chancellor, said: "Sir Gordon's ruling confirms that the Paymaster General's position is untenable."

In his report to the committee, Sir Gordon said: "There is no case for saying that Mr Robinson breached a rule of the House on registration. Nevertheless, his potential interest in the Orion Trust would have been better regis-

Channel Islands inquiry anger

A row erupted between the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man and the Government after ministers announced an inquiry into financial laws and regulations in the tax havens. The Home Office said it was not linked to the controversy over the financial affairs of Geoffrey Robinson. Page 2

tered under Category 10. That rule says that MPs should provide information of any pecuniary interest or other material benefit which a member receives which might reasonably be thought by others to influence his or her actions, speeches or votes in Parliament or actions taken in his or her capacity as a MP.

In a three-paragraph report, the committee agreed with Sir Gordon that there was "no case" for saying that Mr Robinson had broken Commons' rules, but it added: "Although not a requirement, there are occasions when interests of this nature would be better registered, and if a doubt should arise, members ought to seek the advice of the Commissioner. We and our predecessors have made this point on several previous occasions. If a member feels it necessary to seek professional advice on a matter of registration it is clear that some doubt must exist."

Mr Robinson said in a statement: "I was confident that Sir Gordon Downey

would conclude, as he did, that there is no case for saying that [I] breached a rule of the House on registration."

Mr Robinson had argued that there was no case for registering his interest in the trust "since he has no right to receive a pecuniary interest or other material benefit" from the trust. He had also told Sir Gordon that distributions would certainly not be made to him while he was a member of the Government and that, without knowledge of the underlying shareholdings, he could not "reasonably be thought by others" to be open to influence.

Charles Kennedy, a Liberal Democrat member of the Committee, said: "It is clear that the Paymaster General could and should have exercised better judgment where his offshore trust arrangements were concerned."

Mr Lilley, whose complaint triggered the twin investigations, said that the commissioner's conclusions were clear: "Sir Gordon thinks the Paymaster General has a clear interest in the trust."

Mr Robinson has been dogged by questions about the £125 million Orion Trust since its existence was disclosed last November. Only two days after the story broke, Mr Robinson was accused of hypocrisy when he launched the Government's plans for a new individual savings account with a £50,000 tax-free limit on personal investments. Tony Blair has, however, defended Mr Robinson throughout, insisting that he has done nothing wrong and that there is no reason for him to resign.



Margaret Moore arriving at court to describe how Geoffrey Boycott beat her

Boycott fined for beating lover in hotel room

FROM BEN MACINTYRE IN GRASSE

Geoffrey Boycott was given a three-month suspended prison sentence and fined £5,000 by a French court yesterday for beating his former mistress, blacking both of her eyes.

Margaret Moore was also awarded the single symbolic franc she had sought in damages after her lawyers told the court that the former England cricketer had subjected her to a "brutal and caustic" assault during a row about money. Boycott, who is to appeal, had claimed that she slipped.

He was, however, convicted in his absence, having sent a fax saying he could not attend the court in Grasse, on the French Riviera, because he was covering an international cricket tournament.

His excuse did not impress the court president, Marc Joando, who remarked: "How can we interrupt so noble an activity as cricket? Aeroplanes existed all over the world and Boycott should have made an effort to be there. Now, if he returns to France, he could be arrested for failing to attend."

The French authorities had prosecuted Boycott, 57, for criminal assault even though Mrs Moore had tried to drop the charges before bringing a civil suit. Mrs Moore, 46, who runs a computer software company in London, told the court yesterday that Boycott had threatened to kill her if she spoke about the incident at the Hotel du Cap at Antibes in October 1996.

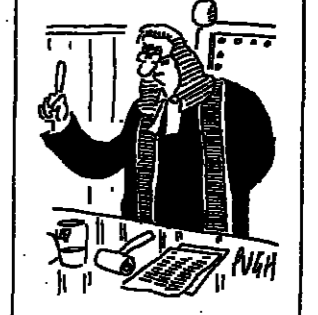


Boycott: sent faxes but did not appear in court

had not secured him enough money. "He is very well-known, a multimillionaire, but he's very mean with money," Mrs Moore told the court, adding that he had left her to pay a £3,700 hotel bill and later sent her a bill for £5,000 for what her lawyer described as "the pleasure of his company."

After the row in the dining room, Mrs Moore said, Boycott had stormed up to his room and began packing. She followed him and threw his washbag and some clothes out of the window. Boycott then attacked her, she said. "He grabbed me by the arm and he hit me 20 times or more. He is very strong. I was screaming."

Continued on page 2, col 4



Give up 'tainted' cash, Hague told

William Hague faced mounting pressure to hand to charity a "tainted" £1m donation allegedly channelled from a suspected far-eastern drugs baron. A former Tory chairman admitted that a donation had been received from the family of Ma Sik-chun. Page 4

£75 billion deal

SmithKline Beecham, the Anglo-American pharmaceuticals company, is in merger talks with American Home Products, a US rival, creating a global giant valued at £75 billion. Page 23

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Ministry 'hit squads' to go into hospitals judged to be failing

By Jill Sherman, Chief Political Correspondent

HIT SQUADS are to be sent into failing hospitals where patient care is thought to be dangerously poor.

Alan Milburn, the Health Minister, will today announce measures to send in teams of experts into hospitals where death rates are high, costs are excessive or where there have been scandals such as the cancer screening mistakes in Exeter.

The squads, similar to the groups going into failing schools, will initially work alongside hospital managers. But the teams, which will include clinicians and managers, will have the power to advise the Secretary of State to dismiss the NHS Trust boards and replace them with government appointees.

This would usually result in the replacement of the hospital chief executive and other managers.

Mr Milburn will also unveil details of new hospital

league tables, which will compare the death rates for different medical conditions, hospital discharge and re-admission rates and the cost of supplies and procedures.

The Government will set average targets which it will expect hospitals to meet. The hit squads, which will be deployed by the new Commission for Health Improvement, will be sent in where hospitals are seen to be performing badly against these measures.

The commission, announced in the White paper to the NHS, will monitor standards across the country. Where performance is low in a number of hospitals in one area the teams will be sent into the relevant health authority, which could also be replaced. Ministers have been particularly concerned about how slow hospitals have acted where blunders have been committed, such as the failure

to diagnose breast cancer cases in Exeter and cervical cancer cases in Canterbury. "We want to nip these problems in the bud," said one health source last night.

The move to set up the new league tables, which is likely to be opposed by the medical profession, is the first time that any government has drawn up performance measures linked to quality of patient care. Until now hospital league tables have been confined to waiting lists despite attempts by successive administrations to assess clinical care.

Doctors have persistently argued that health outcome depends on a variety of factors including how seriously ill the patient is on admission.

Today the Government will publish a consultation paper, titled *A National Framework for Assessing Performance*, which will go out to all NHS professionals. The document

will cover three broad areas where the Government thinks standards can improve. Ministers have discovered widespread variations between hospitals in emergency readmissions, day-care surgery and non-staffing costs.

Most patients who are admitted to hospital are the elderly, many of whom have been discharged too early because they are blocking beds. "This is bad both for the taxpayer and for their families," said the health source.

Today's consultation paper is also expected to insist on more detailed comparisons on how patients are treated and how well they are looked after. Speaking to the Adam Smith Institute, Mr Milburn is expected to emphasise today that the use of hit squads should be a last resort but will argue that this ultimate sanction should provide an incentive for hospitals to improve their performance.

Drugs pair jailed for murders

A DRUG smuggler and his accomplice were jailed for life yesterday for carrying out Britain's biggest gangland killing when they shot dead three major drug dealers in Essex.

Michael Steele, 55, and his accomplice Jack Whomes, 36, murdered the three men as they sat in their Range Rover after being lured by the killers to a remote lane in Rettendon. Their victims, Tony Tucker and his henchmen Patrick Tate and Craig Rolfe, had formed a "firm" of drug dealers, club doormen and rinders that was one of the most feared gangs in south Essex. The three were shot in the head at close range.

The third member of Steele's gang, Darren Nicholls, acted as driver for the killers. Nicholls gave evidence against Steele and Whomes and is now living in hiding under a new identity.

Drug turf war, page 5

Legal work for Princess fund going to tender

By Frances Gurr, Legal Correspondent

THE law firm Mishcon de Reya could lose its exclusive legal work for the Princess of Wales Memorial Fund after the trustees decided to put all its professional needs out to tender. The unanimous decision came five days after the disclosure that Mishcon had sent the fund a £500,000 bill. The trustees expressed "gratitude to and confidence in the firm's work", but said that they would be extending the fund's tendering procedures. The board would "continue to review all charges by professional and other providers of

services". It also expressed confidence in Anthony Julius, the senior Mishcon partner who acted for the Princess during her divorce and is now interim chairman of the fund. The board nevertheless intended to elect a permanent chair "when the time was right". When the future over Mishcon de Reya's fees erupted last week, the fund trustees defended the firm's charges as "reasonable and appropriate" and denied reports that they were considering changing advisers. But lawyers said yesterday that the tendering exercise would probably lead to the work being parcelled out to different law firms to enable the fund to tailor

expertise for particular tasks and ensure and demonstrate value for money. Mishcon insisted that it did not regard the statement as indicating that the fund wished to disperse with its services. Jonathan Cameron, head of media and intellectual property, said: "We very much welcome this statement. It confirms publicly the recommendation we have made all along and the understanding we have lived with. We welcome the opening out to tender by the fund of all its professional services, including legal."

The firm would decide whether to tender for future work with the fund when it was invited to do so, Mr Cameron said. The fund is in the process of recruiting a full-time chief executive and Mr Cameron said: "My understanding is that they don't think it practical to start tendering until the chief executive is *in situ* - which may not be for a couple of months."

The fund's spokeswoman Vanessa Corringham said that it had always been the intention to invite tenders for its professional services and Mishcon had recommended it. "Of course" the firm would be invited to tender. "This was a complete vote of confidence from the trustees, unanimously passed, for Mishcon and its work for the fund."

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Hill prepares for drive back to pole position

Could be rurred if we can't receive r completed tax return 1st January

Revenue

Breeding tells as camel gets through the needle

As news reaches us that a camel has been crossed with a llama, I can report the appearance at Westminster of Donald Dewar, answering questions on Scotland.

In Arabia, the novel camelid strain has been called the cama. The newborn example is named Rama. In Britain, back in 1937, Mr Dewar's mother named her baby son Donald, unaware that the infant was to prove an early prototype cama.

Dewar must be remained Dama at once. To watch Dama lunge into action at the dispatch box yesterday was notice the link. Reports claim that the cama has the appearance of a llama but the stature of the (larger) camel, and smaller ears. Tall, gaunt

and lugubrious, the Scottish Secretary also has a long neck and small ears.

Reports claim that the cama shares the camel's generally sardonic attitude to life, but lacks the beast's sudden violence. Like the llama, the Scottish Secretary is a mild, long-suffering mammal; but, like the camel, exudes an air of secret indignation.

Dama is always on the verge of irritation, hints at suppressed exasperation, yet remains courteous at all times. Like the camel's, Dama's face itself — long, droopy, mournful and hollow-cheeked — stays impassive. But both animals are cunning, patient and endlessly resourceful. He may need to be, once he is first



MATTHEW PARRIS
POLITICAL SKETCH

Minister of Scotland. Dewar is planning to run for the top job in the new Scottish Parliament, but he will not escape the needling questions any Scottish chief must face.

A glance at yesterday's Order Paper shows that almost every question covers what will be a Scottish Parliament's responsibility. Health, investment, farm income, education, local government, water boards, roads and bridges, ferry services... remove what will not be a Westminster concern, and the list

evaporates. So will there continue to be a Scottish Questions Session at Westminster? It is hard to imagine what MPs could ask about. Yet transfer yesterday's questions to Edinburgh — and place them in the mouths of MSPs with no career reason to apologise for a Westminster administration — and every Scottish Question becomes a bed of nettles.

Most were about money. The money comes from London and is decided by the Cabinet. The man

answering the questions, however, will not be in the Cabinet and his career will be based in Edinburgh.

Torn between setting up his Edinburgh office as a trench from which to shell Downing Street, or being depicted by Scots as an English lackey, the tension on Dewar will test the forbearance of even the toughest camelid.

And another cama may be needed — this time to represent the Conservative position. Of the 15 questions put down for answer yesterday by English backbench Tories, almost half were designed to launch complaints about Scotland's share of public spending. This, as the minister Sam Galbraith pointed out to Laurence Robinson (C, Tewkes-

NEWS IN BRIEF

Cabbie is victim of loyalist revenge

Larry Brennan, a 52-year-old Roman Catholic taxi driver with a Protestant girlfriend, became the 3,236th victim of Northern Ireland's Troubles on Monday night. A gunman shot him four times in the chest as he sat in his cab on Belfast's Ormeau Road.

Mr Brennan was the third sectarian murder in two days. He had no paramilitary connections and was shot by loyalists seeking to avenge that morning's murder of a prominent South Belfast Protestant.

CID suspensions

Three more detectives from the zero-tolerance Middlesbrough CID have been suspended by a team investigating corruption allegations. The number suspended now stands at seven, including Superintendent Ray Mallon, who is credited with bringing the tough policy to Britain.

HMSO criticised

A "naive" deal struck by Her Majesty's Stationery Office to supply equipment to schools in Ulster at cost taxpayers up to £3.2 million, according to a highly critical report published today by the Commons Public Accounts Committee into the £6.5 million contract.

Rights explained

A campaign to increase people's awareness of their rights as citizens of the European Union was launched by the Government and European Commission. The Citizens First campaign aims to make clear people's rights to travel, work, train, shop, study and live throughout the EU.

Boy, 12, a father

A 12-year-old boy has become Britain's youngest father after his 16-year-old girlfriend gave birth to a son. Sean Stewart, of Sharnbrook, Bedfordshire, was at the bedside of Emma Webster as she gave birth to the 6lb boy at the Bedford Hospital. The couple's families are neighbours.

Train kills dogs

Eleven foxhounds were killed when they were hit by a Eurostar train on the Channel Tunnel line. The hounds were out with the West Kent Hunt which was hunting between the villages of Tudeley and Five Oak Green. The train was held up for 45 minutes as the power was switched off.

Cowboys' corral

An ombudsman for estate agents was launched, offering home buyers greater protection with up to £50,000 compensation. It was hoped the voluntary scheme for Britain's 10,000 agents would remove cowboys from the most-hated of professions. It offers sellers greater protection, too.

Gloomy genes

Parents can pass on gloom to their children through their genes, psychiatrists have discovered. The gloomy gene can give children the propensity to create mayhem by exaggerating the importance of minor setbacks, a study says. Suicide and other types of self-harm are also genetic.

Foster award

A foster mother prevented from caring for children after she was accused of washing an eight-year-old boy's mouth out with soap and water was awarded £500 by the Local Government Ombudsman. Newham council in East London was found to have acted unreasonably towards her.

Islands attack Treasury move on 'dirty money'

By RICHARD FORD AND RICHARD MILES

A FURIOUS row broke out between the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man and the Government last night after ministers moved to force them to curb international financial crime and money-laundering.

The Government was accused of failing to consult fully the islands' representatives before announcing a full-scale inquiry into financial laws and regulations in Jersey, Guernsey and the Isle of Man.

A former senior Treasury official is to carry out the six-month review which the Home Office said was not linked to the controversy over the financial affairs of Geoffrey Robinson, the Paymaster General, or the islands' status as tax havens.

But in the islands there was suspicion that in spite of the denials, the timing of the inquiry was connected with the affairs of Mr Robinson. The Home Office sources said that the review followed concerns expressed by the European Union and United States



Williams said Crown had power to intervene

announced was connected with the Robinson affair," he added.

Leading figures in Jersey and Guernsey expressed anger at suggestions that the island were a haven for money-launderers and said the Home Office was attempting to "bounce" them into accepting the review even though they had not seen or agreed to its terms of reference.

Councillor Morgan said: "It is very unusual that there were no prior consultations on this, as there would normally be. In the past they have always behaved very correctly with us."

Senator Frank Walker, president of Jersey's finance and economic committee, condemned the absence of consultation over the inquiry into a matter of vital importance to the island's economy. "Not to be consulted on a matter of this type and of this importance is unprecedented."

He said that Jersey had no objection in practice to taking part in the review but he warned the Home Office that the terms of reference of the inquiry would have to be agreed.

The Home Office inquiry will include consideration of measures for "deterrent, investigating and punishing financial crime including money-laundering and fiscal offences", particularly in cases with an international dimension.

It will also be considering regulation of the banking, insurance and financial services factors and the registration of companies on the islands.

Jersey, Guernsey and the Isle of Man control around £300 billion of investments. About a third of this sum has been deposited by UK residents, attracted by favourable rates of tax. Non-residents are do not pay tax on income, including share dividends.

□ The Isle of Man, Guernsey and Jersey are internally self-governing dependencies of the Crown but though they are not part of the United Kingdom, the Government is responsible for their defence and international relations.

In exercising its responsibilities for the Channel Islands, the Crown operates through ministers acting as Privy Counsellors. All primary legislation for the islands requires the approval of the Privy Council.

Parliament has a residual power to legislate for the Channel Islands but it is contrary to constitutional convention for the powers to be used on domestic matters.

Special status pays dividends for islands

By GAVIN LUMSDEN

GUERNSEY, Jersey and the Isle of Man have established themselves as major financial services centres in recent years by exploiting their status as self-governing "Crown dependencies".

While all three islands rely on the United Kingdom for defence and come under its foreign affairs policy, legally and fiscally the territories have a long history of being distinct from the mainland.

Guernsey and Jersey have enjoyed a qualified form of independence since 1204 when the English Crown lost its claim to the Duchy of Normandy. Both have Parliaments known as the States. The Isle of Man, meanwhile, boasts the world's longest continuously sitting Parliament in the Tynwald, set up 1,000 years ago by the Vikings.

The territories enjoy a special relationship with the European Union as well, included in its free trade area but exempt from its legal jurisdiction.

All three islands have used their freedom to set low rates of personal and corporate taxation to attract hundreds

of billions of pounds from international and UK investors. In Jersey and Guernsey individuals and companies alike are taxed at 20 per cent, a rate unchanged since 1940. Inheritance and capital taxes are non-existent, as is VAT. The Isle of Man is slightly more complicated with two bands of income tax of 15 per cent and 20 per cent.

At the heart of the islands' appeal to investors is the fact that non-residents can earn interest and income from investments tax free. UK investors, who make up about a third of the clients, do not escape tax in this country, but tax on interest earned by money on deposit can be deferred until it is due.

Equity investors, meanwhile, can choose to put their money in non-distributor funds. Money in those becomes liable to income tax only when it is brought back to the UK.

As they have become increasingly reliant on financial services, the islands have moved to increase regulation of the sector, attempting to distance themselves from more shady offshore havens.

Racier side of hero who did not live up to reputation

By PHILIP DELVES BROUGHTON

AS A professional cricketer, Geoffrey Boycott was renowned for living with his mother in Yorkshire and sleeping with his bat. Recent events, however, have revealed a racier side to "Boycott".

When he was earning his reputation as a cussed though prodigious run-scorer for Yorkshire and England, Boycott was a parody of his county's stereotypical virtues: determined, obsessive to the point of selfishness, tight-lipped and blunt. Now, by contrast, his love life is splashed across the tabloids and he is leaving his beloved Yorkshire to live near Poole Harbour in Dorset.

Appearing on Radio 4's *In the Psychiatrist's Chair* in 1996, Boycott reacted to Dr Anthony Clare's gentle questions as though they were bearers sent down by a West Indian "quack". Dr Clare said afterwards that Boycott had forced him to revise his opinion that no man was an island.

Boycott's relationships with women, however, are as convoluted as his opinions on cricket are straightforward.

If a batsman batted with the kind of cavalier approach Boycott has shown in his love life, the voices in the commentary box would soon be shouting "Roobish".

Born and raised in the pit



Margaret Moore: both eyes were blackened in attack

village of Fitzwilliam, Boycott has never married. For the past 40 years, however, he has maintained a relationship with Ann Wyatt, 12 years his elder.

They met when Boycott was 18, languishing in the Yorkshire second team and working at the pensions office in Barnsley where Miss Wyatt was his senior.

Boycott did not move in with her, however, until his mother died when he was 43. Miss Wyatt would travel with Boycott on cricket tours, where she was known as the

Black Widow because of her glossy black hair.

Where Miss Wyatt was constant, however, off the field, Boycott was behaving less like a doughty opener and more like a showboating No.6 at a country house beer match.

For ten years, he conducted an affair with a *Carry On* film extra, Shirley Western, whom he called his "pocket battleship". Next up was Rachel Swinglehurst, a divorcee who accompanied him on tour and by whom he had a daughter, Emma Jane, now 9.

As his lucrative career as a commentator and pundit took off, there was Sylvia Reid, a sales manager whom Boycott met in 1991. She infuriated his critics by saying: "His love-making was like his batting. We had a slow build-up and then it was explosive."

After her was Margaret Moore, whom he has been convicted of assaulting. His team-mates insist there was also the occasional hotel barmaid to be had, but not if Boycott was batting the next day.

Brian Close, the former Yorkshire captain with whom Boycott had a memorable falling out, once said of his old team-mate: "You can't name me two blokes in the game who have a good word to say about him."

But then, as the Greatest Living Yorkshireman has said: "I can only be as I am — there's no point flanneling."

working at the pensions office in Barnsley where Miss Wyatt was his senior.

Boycott did not move in with her, however, until his mother died when he was 43. Miss Wyatt would travel with Boycott on cricket tours, where she was known as the

Boycott fined for assault

Continued from page 1

and screaming." The attack ended, she said, when the hotel reception, alerted to the fracas, telephoned the room.

Mrs Moore added that Boycott had hit her twice before. "After this attack both my eyes were closed and I was blinded," she said, showing the judge a broken gold bracelet, which she told him had been ripped from her arm in the assault.

The court was also shown photographs of Mrs Moore with two black eyes and severe bruising.

Boycott sent two faxes to the court. In one, containing a statement he made to *The Sun* newspaper, he claimed that Mrs Moore went out of control because he would not marry her. "I tried to restrain her and she slipped and fell, hitting the right side of her head on the floor." A large lump appeared on her forehead. He accepted that she did not look "too

good" the next day and said it may have given the wrong impression.

He said he had no idea the matter had been reported to police as an assault. "Indeed, I wish I had known, because then I would have been able to give my side of the events at the time, before the bruising under the eyes appeared the following day. When a relationship turns sour it is amazing how events get distorted — and hell hath no fury like a woman scorned. I don't go around assaulting men or women."

But Mrs Moore's lawyer Stephane Choukroun rejected Boycott's explanation, saying: "She would have had to fall on one eye and then the other." He described the attack as "a mixture of brutality and callousness."

Both he and Mrs Moore emphasised that, as a civil plaintiff, she had asked for only one franc in compensation since she

wanted justice, not money. "Since the beginning Mr Boycott has said that he is the victim and she is guilty. She asks only that he realises what he has done," M Choukroun said.

But Boycott's solicitor, Richard Knaggs, said last night that he would appeal and threatened legal action against Mrs Moore if she continued to "make untrue and defamatory" allegations against him. Mr Knaggs said: "An immediate appeal has been lodged which automatically sets aside the decision of the court which was made in Mr Boycott's absence. A fresh hearing date has been requested."

Boycott is due to commentate on England's Test series in the West Indies which starts next week, but he is not expected there until Sunday and he was believed to be in England last night. His solicitor declined to say where.

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Butcher firm is fined £2,200 for food poisoning

By Shirley English

THE butcher's shop at the centre of the world's worst E-coli 0157 food poisoning outbreak, in which 20 people died, was fined a total of £2,250 yesterday for breaches of food hygiene and safety laws.



Charges against John Barr were dropped

In a dramatic development, butcher John M. Barr & Son, of Wishaw, Lanarkshire, changed an earlier not-guilty plea and admitted two new charges relating to the unhygienic preparation of cooked meat using dirty equipment, which led to food sold in November 1996 being contaminated with the bacterium.

It meant the trial, which took almost a year to bring to court, was expected to involve up to 200 witnesses and to last a month, was over within an hour. Mr Barr, his wife and son were not in court to hear Sheriff Lewis Cameron impose a fine of £750 for breaches of food hygiene regulations, and of £500 for supplying and selling goods contaminated with E-coli 0157. The maximum penalty for the first charge was £5,000, and £20,000 for the second under the Food Safety Act 1990.

Wishaw, who spent four weeks in hospital with E-coli 0157 food poisoning, said: "I wanted answers to how the outbreak started. Me and hundreds of others are still none the wiser."

Frank Roy, MP for Wishaw, said he was shocked at the result and would be seeking a meeting with health ministers to press for a prompt start to the Fatal Accident Inquiry.

But George Moore, Mr Barr's solicitor, said he was pleased with the outcome. He said that the partners decided to accept the "reduced charges" after taking legal advice. They were told that charges related to selling contaminated food were virtually impossible to defend.

The firm admitted that between August and November 1996, work surfaces, knives and other equipment used to prepare and store both raw and cooked meat at the shop were not kept clean, and as a result food was not protected against contamination, rendering it "unfit for human consumption and injurious to health".

In particular a boiler used to cook meat joints and stews in the butcher's factory area at the back of the shop, and a vacuum packing machine for packaging both raw and cooked products, were contaminated with E-coli 0157. At its peak around 400 people were affected by the E-coli 0157 outbreak, and 160 were admitted to hospital.

Paul Santoni, the solicitor who represents around 20 victims, confirmed last night that the compensation claims against the Wishaw butcher would go ahead. He said civil claims for about 40 people had been settled out of court, for sums that were generally in four figures.

One of those affected by the outbreak, Patricia Canavan, last night told Scottish Television: "If you believe in the courts, then you think that they will actually help you fight that battle. You put your trust in the system to find the truth. What's £2,250 - it's nothing."



John M. Barr & Son, of Wishaw, Lanarkshire: the shop at the centre of the E-coli 0157 outbreak



Christian Lacroix's organza coat of many colours worn by Honor Fraser yesterday

Frothy Lacroix tipped for the Oscars

FROM GRACE BRADBERRY
STYLE EDITOR, IN PARIS

CHRISTIAN LACROIX let his imagination run riot at Paris Fashion Week yesterday, conjuring up little pink frothy dresses and rose-petal bags before the lavish ballgowns almost walked themselves down the catwalk.

women either love or loathe. Those who love them were there yesterday; the frothier the frock, the louder they clapped.

The haughtiest-looking models in Paris looked down their noses at the awestruck clientele, sweeping trains and tulle behind them. Honor Fraser got to wear the most outlandish selection, including an organza technicolour dreamcoat and a painted tulle petticoat over pale pink

corset-swimsuit, creating the kind of *embonpoint* the photographers love. Blue "plate" designs on the back of jackets gave a witty take on the lifestyles of the *haute bourgeoisie*, while the smoking, tie and dye effect prints and tufted fabrics had just the kind of *haute* peasant feel that Lacroix devotes adore.

On the catwalk the clothes may look like fancy dress, but the show will have delighted actresses search-

ing for an Oscar dress - last year Kristin Scott-Thomas chose Lacroix. Lacroix provided a contrast from the restraint of Karl Lagerfeld's show, which took the house of Chanel back to its roots at 31 rue Cambon, the six-storey house where Coco Chanel lived and worked that is now a Chanel boutique. The quiet, intimate show was largely a comment on the antics of the British designers currently in Paris.



Ingrid Tait and Duncan McLean on route to Paris

Helicopter flies couple to fashion whirl

By Gillian Harris

A TEXTILE designer who was unable to travel from Orkney to a fashion show in Paris because of blizzards was rescued by helicopter yesterday.

Ingrid Tait, 33, one of Scotland's leading designers and her husband, the novelist Duncan McLean, were flown off the island just hours before Miss Tait was due to exhibit her latest collection of designer accessories.

The show, opening today, is expected to result in £100,000 worth of contracts for Miss Tait. But on Monday Miss Tait was trapped in her hillside home surrounded by snowdrifts several feet deep. The roads were blocked and Kirkwall airport was closed.

Two neighbours, former offshore workers, suggested trying to use a helicopter. The couple called PDG Helicopters of Inverness, who were transporting engineers from the power company Hydro Electric to work on damaged

pylons. The company agreed to find room for them on a flight. "It was pretty spectacular," said Miss Tait, whose company Tait & Style sells accessories to shops such as Liberty and the Conran Shop in London. "I was worried when I thought we were stuck. The Paris show represents a major part of my income."

Their progress, however, was not smooth. On the drive from her home in Stenness to the helicopter landing pad in Kirkwall, Miss Tait's car broke down. The local blacksmith, who happened to be passing, gave them a lift into town. When they arrived at Inverness airport, they discovered that the flight to Paris was delayed. John McCallum, from PDG Helicopters said: "When we heard about their plight we basically let them cage a lift to Inverness. We were delighted to help them make it to Paris."

Boateng fury at 'grotesque' adoption ban

By Mark Henderson

THE Health Minister Paul Boateng last night ordered an investigation into why Birmingham City Council advised a white couple with two mixed-race children, they would not be allowed to adopt again in a "grotesque misrepresentation" of race regulations. Mr Boateng said he found it "deeply repellant" that Megan and Steve Broadhurst were told they would not be suitable as adoptive parents for black or mixed-race children because they were white, or for white children as their older children were mixed-race.

"Care and love, not race, are the defining elements of a good family," Mr Boateng told *The Times*. "To suggest otherwise is a grotesque misrepresentation of the 1989 Children Act. Ideology and dogma must not be allowed to stand in the way of a child's right to a family life. There is something deeply repellant about subjecting a welcoming family to this sort of racial classification."

lately incandescent" over the way the Broadhursts had been treated, yesterday demanded a full explanation from Birmingham's social services department.

The Broadhursts adopted two mixed-race children, Rickie and JoJo, in the 1980s and described their treatment as a "racial farce".

Birmingham council said it rejected the Broadhursts' account of the advice given to them by social workers when they inquired about adopting another child in 1993. The council said in a statement: "Two exploratory pre-assessment visits were arranged to identify what sort of placement the family felt able to offer to a child. The family did not proceed following these meetings - and at no stage were they told they were unsuitable to adopt and we would strongly refute their recollection of comments made at those meetings."

A spokesman said it did not operate a blanket policy of placing children with adoptive parents of the same race.

Court silences sound of the Spice Girls

By Simon de Bruxelles

AFTER listening to his Spice Girls records for 16 hours a day for two years, what James Evans' neighbours really, really wanted was a bit of peace and quiet. Yesterday they got it.

The pop lover turned up the volume so loud that the words to the group's hits, such as *Wannabe* and *Spice Up Your Life*, could be heard quite distinctly in houses on the other side of the street.

Evans ignored a succession of orders requiring him to keep down the noise and became, in the words of his own lawyer, "the most hated man in the neighbourhood". Magistrates in Cardiff yesterday took pity on Evans' neighbours and ordered the confiscation of his hi-fi, a tape deck and three loudspeakers.

Evans, of Ely, Cardiff, was also fined £50 with £150 costs after admitting failing to comply with a notice ordering him to turn down his music.

The court heard that residents of the block of flats where Evans, 24, lives would be kept awake until 4am by

the sound of the Spice Girls. An environmental health officer visited the next-door flat at 2.15am and heard the group so clearly through the wall that he could write down the lyrics. Council officials later seized Evans' powerful sound system under the 1990 Environmental Protection Act.

David Khan, for the defence, said: "Evans appears to be the most hated person in the neighbourhood. Everyone wants him out of there but he doesn't understand that he's being anti-social. He's just a music fan who enjoys listening to pop in his own home."

Housebound neighbour Lorraine Pender, 80, said after the case: "I'm very relieved to hear the music equipment has been taken away. I'm severely disabled and all the noise has affected my quality of life."

"He used to play pop music all day and night. It was so loud it used to vibrate my flat."

Denis Allen, 47, said: "I quite like the Spice Girls on the television, but it was annoying if you wanted peace and quiet to get some sleep."

Banks quicksteps for victory

Ruth Gledhill reports on Sports

Minister's plan to put his best feet forward for Olympic gold

FAST footwork by the Minister for Sport could increase Britain's Olympic successes. Tony Banks is lobbying hard for full medal status to be granted to an activity in which Britain already leads the world. Step forward, the ballroom dancers.

Mr Banks, best known for his devotion to football, was yesterday at pains to argue that ballroom dancing was just as much a sport. The Chelsea fan said: "There is a lot of similarity between football and dancing when they are both done well." A well-executed football pass could be "as lovely as a balletic pirouette" and dancing had all the elements of competitiveness and movement.

He was speaking as 200 professionals limbered up for the Open UK championships in Bournemouth today. A fierce battle is expected between the reigning world champions, Marcus and Karen Hilton from Rochdale, and the world runners-up, Luca Bareschi and Lorraine Barry from London. But despite international successes, Britain's

dancers have never received the public recognition here that they are accorded in countries such as Japan and Germany, when they are mobbed for autographs.

In support, Mr Banks offered the kind of comments he usually saves for soccer: "There is a lot of public support for dance sport, so damn those snobs or cynics who make snide comments and know nothing. They make me want to

throw up." He is lobbying hard for dance sport to be at the 2004 Athens Olympics, and will raise the issue when he lunches today with the Greek ambassador. The International Olympic Committee recognised dance sport as an Olympic sport last autumn, but has yet to say when it might become a medal sport.

"Anything we can compete in and do well at must be good for the morale of the country," Mr Banks said. "A number of my cousins from Birmingham are good ballroom dancers. They have won lots of medals. I still do a bit of dancing myself, but very badly."

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Tories insist £1m gift came with no strings

By PHILIP WEBSTER, POLITICAL EDITOR, JONATHAN MIRSKY AND NICHOLAS WATT

CHRIS PATTEN said yesterday that a Hong Kong publishing tycoon who gave £1 million to the Tory party never raised with him the fate of his father, a suspected drugs trafficker and fugitive. The former Hong Kong Governor said that he would have given "short shrift" to Ma Ching-kwan, whose family was alleged to have given the money to help the return of his father, Ma Sik-chun, to the colony. "I would have told him that these were matters for the Attorney-General's office and the police," Mr Patten said. But the newspaper which made the disclosure about the donation widened its charges yesterday by claiming that Mr Patten had encouraged Mr Ma to establish a new English-speaking paper that would support his policies as Governor. Mr Patten told *The Times* that he had welcomed the setting up of the paper at such an important time before the 1997 handover. But he denied the suggestion that he

had encouraged Mr Ma to do so. Jeremy Hanley, a former Tory chairman, admitted to *The Times* yesterday that Mr Ma had given a donation and that he had met him. But he, too, said that Mr Ma had not raised his father's plight and that the money had been given "with no strings attached". Mr Ma had requested a meeting with the Prime Minister and duly met John Major for dinner, at which he was thanked for his donation. Some £430,000 of the money was used to buy a printing plant in Reading to produce campaign leaflets and posters. It also emerged yesterday that Mr Ma assiduously cultivated contacts in the Tory party and won the support of David Mellor. One Tory described Mr Mellor as Mr Ma's "greatest friend". Mr Mellor earned thousands of pounds advising Mr Ma on potential investments in Britain and on the setting up of *Eastern Express*. Mr Mellor



Ma Ching-kwan: gave £1 million to the Tories

would not comment last night, but he recently admitted that he was "remunerated at an appropriate level". Mr Mellor, a QC, also advised Mr Ma in his attempts to quash drugs charges against his father, who fled Hong Kong to Taiwan in 1978 when drugs trafficking charges were laid against him. The latest revelations brought fresh embarrassment

to the Tories over political funding. William Hague pledged to return any money proven to have come from illegal sources, but Conservative Central Office made clear that he was not committing himself to the immediate repayment of any sum. Labour called on the Tories to pay £1 million to drug-related charities. The *Oriental Daily News*, Hong Kong's biggest-selling newspaper, said that, in 1994, Mr Patten felt that the *South China Morning Post* would take a pro-Beijing line under its new ownership. According to the *News*, he suggested to Mr Ma, then the publisher of the *News*, that he found a paper which would support British policies. *Eastern Express* soon began publication. It was rumoured in Hong Kong at the time that Government House had indicated to Mr Ma that, in exchange for establishing the paper, he would be designated a Justice of the Peace, an honorary position in Hong Kong. Mr Ma was also assured, it was said, that he would receive



Ma Sik-chun, Ma Ching-kwan's father, after his arrest on drug charges in 1977. He fled to Taiwan soon afterwards

invitations to Government House. Mr Ma was said to feel socially insecure because both his father and uncle were in Taiwan evading heroin trafficking charges. The Hong Kong Civil Service was reported to be outraged by the possible award of the JP post and the award was never made. In that same year, the *Oriental Daily News* claimed

on Tuesday, Mr Ma and his family made the £1 million donation, allegedly on the understanding that the elder Ma would be permitted to return to Hong Kong. Mr Patten has denied knowledge of such arrangements. He said yesterday: "It would have been wholly wrong and wholly inappropriate for me to have anything to do with Conservative Party fund-raising when I

was Governor. I did not have anything to do with it—either Mr Ma or anybody else." This is not the first uproar about the Tories and Hong Kong campaign contributions. In early September 1991, when Sir David Wilson was Governor, John Major visited Hong Kong. He intended to have dinner with Sir Y.K. Pao and Li Ka-shing, from whom he would receive, respectively,

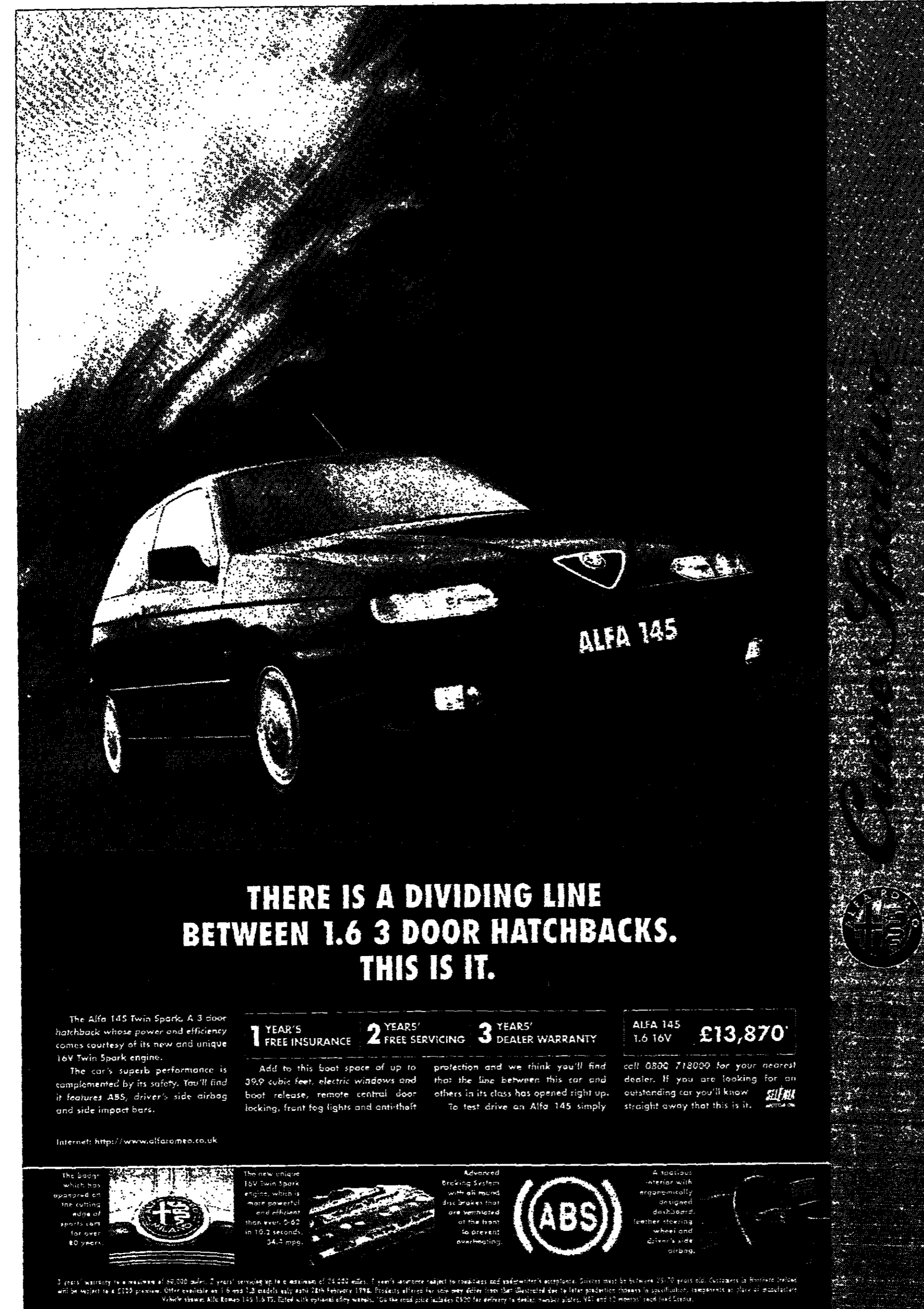
£1 million and £900,000 for campaign funds. Sir David told the Prime Minister that his visit should be seen as official, not political, and that Mr Li had been convicted of insider trading (not a crime in Hong Kong). Graham Bright, then on Mr Major's staff, leaked to reporters that the Prime Minister was "serious" with Sir David and would replace him.

Wealthy family built empire on drugs trade

By JONATHAN MIRSKY

THE Ma family has become enormously rich from publishing and likes to be seen in the company of world statesmen. Mr Ma Ching-kwan, who until two years ago was chairman of the board of the family firm, lunched with John Major when he was Prime Minister. In 1994, during the launch of his English-language newspaper, *Eastern Express*, videos were shown on a vast screen of Ronald Reagan and George Bush wishing Mr Ma well. But the origins of the family fortune are so deeply connected to international drug-dealing that Mr Ma's late uncle Ma Sik-yu, who died in 1991 on the run from the Hong Kong police, is still known as Ma Baifen, "white powder Ma". Mr Ma's father, Ma Sik-chun, still lives in exile in Taiwan, to which he fled in 1977, just ahead of the Hong Kong drugs police—with the help of accomplices in the colonial force. The brothers had originally come to Hong Kong from Shanghai, and plunged into the heroin trade which in the

postwar colony was extensive and entangled with the police. The Mas expanded into restaurants and fishing and soon founded the Oriental Press Group publishers, the parent company of the *Oriental Daily News*, which has been printing the allegations about large donations to the Tories. It was in 1977, acting on a police tip, that Ma Sik-yu fled to Australia to evade drug-trafficking charges in Hong Kong. In the same year, his brother Sik-chun was jailed on a heroin-trafficking charge but sailed away in the dead of night to Taiwan, where he was joined by Sik-yu. In 1996 Ma lawyers approached the Hong Kong Government to discover if Sik-chun could return to the colony. This was two years after the alleged million-pound donation to the Tories and it was the Hong Kong authority's insistence that if Mr Ma returned he would face arrest which resulted in the April 1997 demand, described in the *Oriental Daily News*, that the Tories return the gift.



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Gang feud led to killings on country lane

Drugs 'firm' murdered by the supplier who double-crossed them, Stewart Tendler reports

THE three underworld drug dealers murdered as they sat in a Range Rover in a remote lane in Essex were killed before they could kill the man who had double-crossed them. Michael Steele baited a trap for the gang with talk of a cocaine deal, then he and his accomplice, Jack Whomes, shot them in the head at close range.

Steele, a 55-year-old pilot and expert navigator who specialised in importing cannabis from Holland, and Whomes, 36, were jailed for life at the Old Bailey yesterday for the "ruthless" killings. Their victims, Tony Tucker, and his henchmen Patrick Tate and Craig Rolfe, had formed a "firm" of drug dealers, club doormen and minders that was one of the most feared gangs in the south Essex underworld.

Tucker, 38, had started a small security business in the 1980s, offering doormen to clubs and bars. It became highly profitable and in the 1990s he branched out to cover raves, concerts and sporting events. Control of the doors of such events meant control of the supply of drugs. His men were recruited from a network of gyms across Essex and were also used to collect bad debts. Police estimate Tucker was earning at least £8,000 a week from legitimate business.

The real killing, however, was in drugs. Tucker won the contract for Raquets night club in Basildon, where the Ecstasy that killed Leah Betts was bought. He also ran security at Club UK in South London, later raided for drugs. Tucker was becoming a major drugs distributor himself and began to behave like an underworld don. When he visited Raquets others were warned not to cross him. When the remnants of the Kray gang made an approach about putting fruit machines into clubs he protected they were dismissed as old hat.

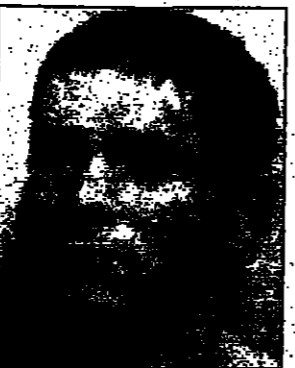
His men smashed up the riding stables used by his girlfriend and then offered protection in return for free stabling. He took cannabis worth £18,000 off a dealer who did not dare to complain. When another dealer failed to pay up after Club UK was



Victim: Tony Tucker



Victim: Patrick Tate



Victim: Craig Rolfe

responsible for killing Kevin Whitaker, who was found dead from a drug overdose in a ditch in November 1994. Whitaker had been involved in a £50,000 deal organised by Rolfe that went wrong. The punishment was three large injections of cocaine and ketamine, used by veterinary surgeons to paralyse muscle in horses.

The third member of the inner circle was Pat Tate, body builder and one-time physical trainer to Kenneth Noye, Brinks Mat fence and suspect in the murder of Stephen Cameron on the M25. Tate, 36, nicknamed The Enforcer, weighed 18 stone and his quick temper and a constant diet of drugs made him dangerous to cross.

When he died he was taking up to eight Ecstasy tablets a day and sometimes took a cocktail including steroids, cocaine and ketamine. Friends said he was increasingly erratic and violent. A few days before he died he got into an argument at a pizza restaurant in Basildon over the topping he wanted. The manager was punched and then had his head smashed down on a glass plate. He was too scared to make a statement to police.

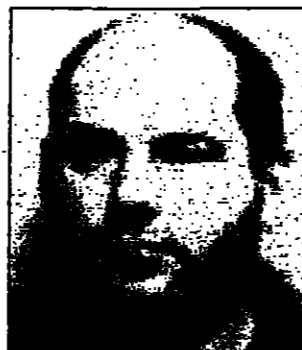
Tate met Steele in Holesley Bay prison in 1993 and they became good friends. Steele was serving nine years after being caught flying 300 kilos of cannabis into the country. When he was released in the summer of 1995 he went back to drug smuggling, bringing the drugs over by rigid inflatable fitted with a powerful outboard motor.

Steele began selling his drugs through Tate to Tony Tucker's firm, but in November 1995 they fell out when Steele was accused of importing poor quality cannabis in which Tate had invested. The cannabis was dumped in a lake and Tate demanded his money back, making a series of threats that Steele "would go up north and never come back", that he would make him beg on his knees and then kill him.

Steele realised he would have to kill Tate before Tate killed him; he would also have to eliminate his boss, Tucker. Steele baited a trap by offering



As Steele, above, got out of the Range Rover, shown being removed by police, Whomes, below, came out of hiding and started shooting at the three occupants



the gang a deal on a cocaine cargo which would be flown in to a makeshift landing strip. They would jump the pilot and steal the drugs, he said. Tate was so excited by the plan he started telling friends it might be big enough for him to retire to Spain.

On December 6, 1995, Steele invited Tucker, Tate and Rolfe to meet him and inspect a landing site near Rettendon, outside Basildon. He met them at a public house and climbed into the back of a Range Rover alongside Tate.

Rolfe was driving and Tucker was in the front seat.

His three victims were relaxed: Tate had not even bothered to take a gun. As the car turned into Workhouse Lane off the A130 it had to stop at a closed gate where Whomes, a burly club bouncer and member of Steele's gang, lay hidden from view. Steele opened the back door to get out and open the gate as Whomes rose from the ground and ran to the car, where he began to blast away.

Only Tate had time to put

up his hands and hunch down - Tucker and Tate were killed outright. Police believe that after Whomes reloaded Steele may have taken the gun and then shot each of the men behind the ear.

The third member of Steele's gang, Darren Nicholls, went as ordered to pick up the killers. Steele later told him he had felt like "the angel of death".

Nicholls gave evidence against Steele and Whomes and is now living in hiding under a new identity.

Mobile phone led detective to the killers

By Stewart Tendler
CRIME CORRESPONDENT



Dibley: his last case after 32 years in police

MICHAEL STEELE and his henchman Jack Whomes were confident that they would not be caught they had left no clues at the scene and believed fear and traditional underworld omerta (silence) would protect them.

But their movements had been tracked by the mobile telephone system on which they relied to set up their trap for the drug dealers Tony Tucker, Patrick Tate and Craig Rolfe.

At first police and the underworld were baffled by the killings. Police believe Tucker and Tate had kept their links to Steele secret.

The police even questioned Paul and Janet Betts, the parents of Leah Betts, the Essex teenager who died after taking an Ecstasy tablet, in case revenge had been a motive. They were quickly cleared.

All the relatives and friends of the dead men refused to talk except one, who told Detective Superintendent Ivan Dibley, on his last case after 32 years in the police, that on the night of the killing Rolfe was to have met "Mickie the Pilot".

On a visit to Essex Police headquarters Mr Dibley mentioned the name to a detective specialising in intelligence on lorry thefts. He produced a file on Michael Steele and Mr Dibley speculated that Steele could be a supplier to Tucker's distribution chain.

Both Tucker and Tate had mobile telephones with them when they were shot and Mr Dibley brought in a specialist team to check their calls. They revealed the existence of Whomes and then Darren Nicholls, who drove the two killers from the murder scene.

Police also found they could use radio beacons which relay telephone calls to pinpoint the area where calls were made.

This enabled them to see that Steele and Whomes had

got gradually closer to the scene of the killings on the day of the murders, ending up less than half a mile away.

Mr Dibley now had to flush out the killers. Police tracked Steele for nearly six months, using bugs, telephone taps and camera surveillance. The officer tried to scare Steele through Sarah Saunders, Tate's girlfriend, who was also close to Steele. Undercover officers posed as members of an Irish gang with IRA links which had dealt with Tate. The "Irishmen" said they were owed money, but Steele would not meet them.

Mr Dibley decided on a "softly, softly" approach. Nicholls might have been the weak link. The break came in May when he was arrested with 10kg of cannabis. Faced with a long sentence, Nicholls offered to talk. He not only confessed to the drugs but said he had driven Whomes to the scene of the killings and had driven him and Steele away afterwards. He revealed how they had boasted about the killings.

Only a few weeks earlier, senior officers had questioned Mr Dibley's strategy and talked of a swoop on the murder suspects. According to colleagues, Mr Dibley decided to retire, but his strategy had paid off.

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 21 1998



Healthy family

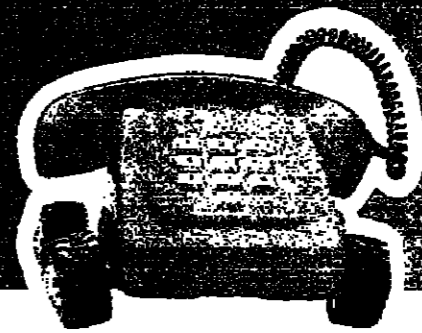
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Thirtysomethings fuel pensions boom

FEARS that the State is unlikely to provide an adequate retirement pension are driving a boom in personal pensions and life assurance, particularly among the under-35s. Consumers spent nearly £70 billion on pensions and insurance last year, compared with £26.8 billion in 1987, as more people realised that government plans to reform the welfare state meant they would not be able to rely on it.

General consumer spending during the same period grew by 94 per cent, and the proportion of total national spending taken up by long-term investments rose by 4.5 per cent, the British Lifestyles report from Mintel said yesterday. Pensions spending went up by 7

per cent in the last 12 months, and Mintel predicts it will be by far the largest growth area over the next five years, with Britons paying nearly £90 billion into pension and life assurance funds by 2002. Pension and life assurance funds today hold 34 per cent of personal assets, against 27 per cent in 1987.

Angela Hughes, consumer research manager at Mintel, said increased spending on pensions and financial services was the most significant trend. "It is driven by the realisation that self-provision for the future will largely have to replace state provision," she said.

Young people and those receiving benefits are becoming much more likely to see the need for long-term

■ Once the young hoped to die before they got old. Now they save for it, worried that the State will no longer provide for them. Mark Henderson reports

investment. Under-35s are starting to buy pensions much earlier than before, Ms Hughes said. "They are the group most likely to be affected by any change, and are starting to prepare for it," she said.

Frank Field, the Minister for Welfare Reform, is considering "stakeholder" pensions, which would rely on regular personal contributions in addition to national insurance. A move towards two-tier pensions, guaranteeing a basic in-

come to the poorest but offering only token payments to the better-off, is also thought to be on the agenda as the Government prepares to publish a Green Paper tackling the future of the state pension.

The Mintel findings are supported by a MORI poll for Direct Line pensions published today, which shows that 92 per cent of adults no longer expect the State to provide a retirement pension adequate for their needs. Mintel's prediction of

further sharp growth in the market is backed up by MORI's finding that 46 per cent still have no personal pension cover.

Adrian Webb of Direct Line said most consumers now recognised that they could no longer rely on state cover. "People are becoming increasingly realistic about what to expect from the State, and more receptive to buying private pensions, especially if they are simple and easy to understand."

Chris Larkin of Marks & Spencer financial services said Mintel's findings mirrored its research. "We found a generation gap, where under-35s accept more readily the erosion of welfare support," he said. "Many of our customers are either starting a second personal pension or inquire about a first one."

Research sponsored by Marks & Spencer found that just 7 per cent expected the State to provide for them in old age, while 42 per cent accepted the need to make their own contributions: 25 to 34-year-olds were most likely to have a personal or occupational pension.

Most people feel confident about their prospects in the millennium, the Mintel report found. Sixty per cent of 20,000 people interviewed said they found living in the 90s "exciting" and were looking forward to 2000 with optimism. Consumer confidence is high, but the public has dropped the "buy now, pay later" approach of the 80s.

Church group attacks 'active' gay love

By Ruth Gledhill

EVANGELICAL church leaders yesterday condemned active homosexuality as sinful and urged homosexuals to be chaste. In a 40-page report published yesterday, the Evangelical Alliance, which claims to represent the views of more than one million Christians in Britain, apologised to homosexuals for the homophobic way they had been treated by the church in the past.

But it was unequivocal in stating that homosexual practice contravenes biblical teaching and was "against God's will". The report, *Faith, Hope and Homosexuality*, includes the verse from Leviticus invoking the death penalty for homosexual acts.

The alliance broadside comes five months ahead of the ten-yearly Lambeth conference of Anglican archbishops and bishops, and is an indication of how seriously the issue of homosexuality is being taken.

Anglican church leaders are struggling to focus the conference's attention on what they regard as the more pressing issue of Third World debt, but churches in Africa are particularly angry at the increasingly liberal stance taken on homosexuality in churches in the West.

Jamaican-born Joel Edwards, the newly appointed general director of the alliance, says in the foreword to the report that, while homophobic behaviour is wrong at all times, priority must be given to the teaching of the Bible, which condemns homosexuality along with incest, adultery and bestiality.

The alliance concedes that it is no worse a sin than adultery and fornication.

The author, Dr David Hillborn, theological secretary of the alliance, said the report commended the work of groups which seek to support homosexual Christians who seek to maintain celibacy, or who seek to re-orient towards a "faithful heterosexual lifestyle".

Peter Taitell, of the homosexual lobby group Outrage, said: "The apology for homophobia is welcome against gay relationships is offensive and insulting."

Maddened cow leads farmers' protest

By Michael Hornsby, Agriculture Correspondent

AN ELDERLY brown cow and her calf forced their way past Downing Street security guards yesterday, urged on by angry farmers protesting about falling incomes.

Police initially refused to let the ten-year-old cow, Mayflower, and her offspring, Mayflower III, into the street, but then briefly opened the wrought-iron gates at the entrance to let a delivery van through. To the cheers of more than 100 farmers, cow and calf burst through in a state of panic. It took about five minutes for farmers and police to calm down the pair and lead them back into Whitehall.

The animals then led a march past the House of Commons, where more than 3,000 farmers from all over Britain were queuing to lobby MPs for more government aid after a rally at Central Hall, Westminster. Two other cows later joined Mayflower on College Green, where they grazed contentedly.

Chris Smallwood, Mayflower's owner, who farms at

Chagford on the edge of Dartmoor, said the cow, a South Devon reared for beef production, was once worth £1,000, but would now fetch just over £300 because of cuts in compensation for the slaughter and destruction of animals over 30 months old.

"Maybe the Government will pay more attention to these animals than they have done so far to us," Mr Smallwood said. "Maybe they will start taking us seriously."

Earlier, Sir David Naish, president of the National Farmers' Union, led a delegation to 10 Downing Street to deliver dozens of potato sacks filled with nearly 700,000 individually signed petitions calling for more help for farmers. He said he had also handed in a letter calling for an urgent meeting with the Prime Minister to discuss what he called "the dire straits to which farmers are being reduced".

At the rally in Central Hall, Sir David was given a standing ovation after a speech in which he said agriculture was



Mayflower resists the efforts of police and her owner, Chris Smallwood, right, after breaking through the Downing Street security cordon.

facing the "worst financial crisis in living memory. I am appalled that our businesses are being crippled by political disinterest in the plight of our rural economies."

Farmers are angry over the Government's continuing failure to take full advantage of compensation to which they say they are entitled under European Union rules to off-

set the effect on their incomes of the strong pound. The union says farmers are entitled to a further £920 million over the next three years. At least eight of the other 14 EU member states have applied for and received similar assistance over the past two years, putting British farmers at a competitive disadvantage, the union says.

Cash compost means that trees can grow on money

By Nigel Hawkes, Science Editor

MONEY could be the root of goodness for gardeners. A new compost which includes shredded banknotes has proved such a success, outperforming traditional peat, that its originators are hoping to expand production.

Shredded old notes from 40 nations, including Britain, were mixed with sand and grit in trials designed to find alternatives to peat at Nature's World garden centre in Middlesbrough. Stuart Goldie, the manager, said that visitors had been amazed by the effect: "We have been

looking at new ways to produce compost. Peat is not going to be around for ever. One method involved bank notes and it has been very successful. We now have a novel new way of helping plants to grow, and it captured the imagination of everyone here."

The old notes come ready shredded from the printer Thomas de la Rue, which supplies many countries. Normally, old notes are burnt after shredding, but Mr Goldie believes recycling in compost would be more

environmentally friendly. "The paper is a cotton-based fibre, so it decomposes quickly, whereas ordinary paper is made of wood-pulp," he said.

More than 12,000 tons of notes are burnt annually by British banks. He believes that up to 40,000 tons of the compost could be produced every year and wants government support to expand the trials.

Yesterday Dr Chris Wheeler, senior environmental lecturer at Glasgow University, welcomed the plan: "It is quite innovative."

Allason's mother defends his name

By Peter Foster

THE elderly mother of Rupert Allason, the former Tory MP who is suing the makers of the television satire *Have I Got News For You* for libel, yesterday said she was "shocked and horrified" to see her son called "a cunning little shit".

Mr Allason, who is representing himself, called his mother to give evidence on the second day of the case in the High Court in London. In a quivering voice, Nuala Allason, 77, said that a friend visiting from America had telephoned her to tell her about the comment, published in *Have I Got News For You*.

"I could not believe it, so I went out and bought the book in W.H. Smith in Sloane Square. I was so upset and shocked to see such language in print," she said.

Asked by her son if it was usual for people to criticise him, given his position as a public figure, Mrs Allason replied: "You have been a policeman and an MP and I could not see there was any reason why they should write that about you."

Mr Allason, who lost his seat in Torbay, south Devon, at the last election, asked his mother if she was proud of him. "Yes," she replied, "I'm particularly proud about the time when he arrested some drug smugglers."

But before she could continue, she was interrupted by the more glorious moments of Mr Allason's career. Mr Justice Phipps reprimanded Mr Allason for

Motorists will not be driven from cars

By Kevin Eason, Motoring Editor

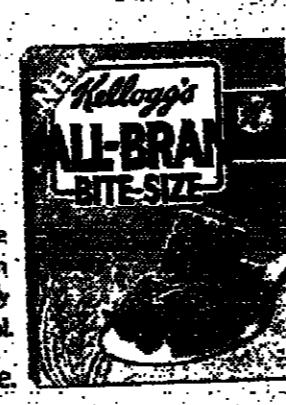
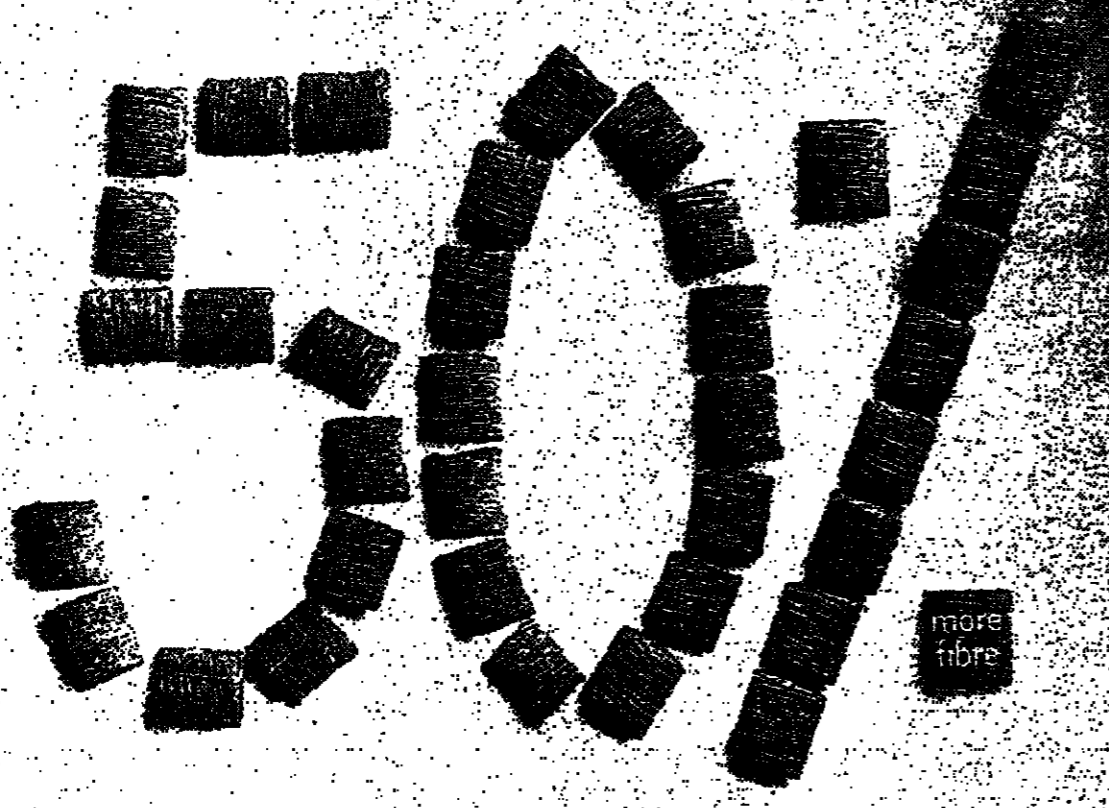
TRAFFIC congestion is costing Britain £10 billion a year, yet drivers would rather sit out the jams than use public transport, according to an examination of attitudes to the country's failing transport system. The Lex Report on Motoring discovered that only 7 per cent of motorists would use public transport to commute, even if congestion doubled their journey times.

The report says that the problem can only worsen, with the number of cars forecast to rise by 10 per cent to 28.4 million in five years.

Gavin Strang, the Transport Minister, says in an introduction to the 107-page report: "The car should not be the automatic choice for all journeys. We cannot stand by and watch as growth in car use continues to accelerate, resulting in worsening congestion and pollution."

His message appears to be falling on deaf ears in a society in which 81 per cent of motorists say they rely on their cars. It seems that only taxation will deter them from entering city centres, with 76 per cent of motorists questioned saying that charges for parking at work would prevent them from driving.

The report says that growing numbers of single, independent women will increase the number of licence holders by between seven and 11 million and more women will buy their own cars.



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TV chiefs attacked over plan to cut party broadcasts

PLANS to cut the number of party political broadcasts and restrict them to election time were condemned as arrogant and unacceptable yesterday.

The broadcasts are regarded as a turn-off for millions of television viewers and radio listeners, but politicians believe they offer a valuable chance to speak directly to the electorate.

The Labour Party said it was "deeply alarmed" by the proposals, made jointly by television and radio chiefs, which are designed to modernise the system. They include scrapping the 70-year-old tradition of post-Budget transmissions and cutting the number of parties allowed to make broadcasts.

Political broadcasts would be limited to five minutes and made only at election time. Minority parties that contest fewer than one sixth of the total number of seats would no longer be granted airtime.

At present, parties that field 50 candidates or more at a general election are allocated at least one broadcast each. Under the new rules parties would have to contest 110 seats to qualify. This would exclude parties such as the Green Party, the Liberal Party, British National Party and Pro-Life party, which all put up between 50 and 110 candidates at last year's election.

Labour, the Liberal Demo-

Politicians fear threat to direct link with the voters, reports Carol Midgley

crats and the smaller parties expressed concern about the plans. But William Hague, the Tory leader, said that they sounded like a sensible idea.

A Labour spokesman attacked the broadcasters — the BBC, Independent Television Commission, Radio Authority and S4C — saying that the changes would diminish democracy.

"They suggest that political parties should not be able to communicate directly with the electorate except at election time," he said. "Broadcasters do not necessarily always know best. To deprive all parties of the chance to explain in their own words their views on the Budget is unacceptable. It's also arrogant for broadcasters to believe that their own coverage of politics in general, and the Budget in particular, is so comprehensive that there is no need for party broadcasts."

Nick Harvey, the Liberal Democrat chairman of campaigns and communications, admitted the broadcasts were "not always the most popular programmes on television" and conceded the system needed modernising. But his party valued the broadcasts because it did not have the "uncritical support" of any national newspaper or the "massive advertising budgets of the other two parties".

Peter Barnett, for the Green Party, said he did not object to the one sixth of seats rule at general or European elections but said it would be very damaging for the party during local elections, when there were "literally thousands of seats to go for".

But Mr Hague said: "To have broadcasts at elections rather than between elections is probably more interesting for the viewer and the voter and probably more useful for the political parties, so, subject to the detail of what is in the recommendations, I think we would give them a fair wind. I think it sounds like a sensible idea."

Last year, Labour and the Tories were allowed ten broadcasts each, including five during the election campaign. The Liberal Democrats were allowed seven. But under the present rules, the parties could get many more slots next year with elections to the European Parliament, the Scottish and Welsh assemblies, and English local councils.

The party political broadcast has a long history. The first general election broadcast went out on radio in October 1924 by the Labour Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald. The first broadcast was made by Winston Churchill in 1928, when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer. In 1951 the BBC screened the first televised election broadcasts for the

three main parties, each being given 15 minutes.

But the BBC and ITC now say that viewers switch off when political broadcasts are shown at other than election time. Figures for the three shown by the BBC since last year's election show a switch-off rate of 13, 27 and 36 per cent. The commercial channels say that they lose up to half their viewers when they screen a political broadcast.

The allocation rules were last revised in 1974. According to Anne Sloman, the BBC's chief political adviser, the decision to reconsider the system followed last year's general election, when it became clear that changes in the constitution would bring a Scottish parliament and Welsh assembly, resulting in more elections.

The broadcasters will be inviting comments on the proposals from the political parties and viewers and listeners.



A broadcast by Anthony Eden: the modern equivalent may be restricted to elections

Blair calls for a cross-party Euro-alliance

By PHILIP WEBSTER, POLITICAL EDITOR

TONY BLAIR claimed last night there had been a "remarkable shift" in public attitudes to Europe as he called for a patriotic alliance to boost Britain's role in the European Union.

Delivering one of his most pro-European speeches, the Prime Minister tried to exploit Tory divisions over Europe by suggesting that like-minded politicians should come together in the cause of a positive relationship.

"In remarks clearly aimed at Tories such as Michael Heseltine, who has already indicated his interest in joining an alliance, Kenneth Clarke and Sir Edward Heath, Mr Blair said that for the first time in many years there was a growing consensus in Britain in favour of 'constructive engagement with Europe'."

And he described the launch of the single currency as "the most significant event" to be addressed during Britain's six-month presidency of the EU.

Mr Blair was trying to bring on board Tories who oppose William Hague's policy of ruling out the single currency for two Parliaments, which he believes will look outdated by the time of the next election.

Speaking in The Hague, Mr Blair said that the issue of Europe was beginning to break down the old political barriers. "Politicians from all parties are slowly coming

together in a patriotic alliance in favour of Britain's central place in Europe. It is an alliance of people who believe that British values of creativity, tolerance, fairness and democracy can influence the shape and destination of Europe. It is an alliance of people who believe that our future prosperity can be shaped by a successful Europe. It is an alliance of people who are hard-headed about the future and hard-headed about Europe's faults."

Although Mr Blair said the Government wanted monetary union to succeed and would work hard to make its launch successful, he gave warning that the creation of a single currency was not in itself the route to prosperity and said that it would present the European economy with big structural shocks. Price differentials would become more transparent to consumers and exchange rate flexibility would no longer be there.

But he added that "barring unforeseen circumstances" he wanted Britain to be in a position to take a decision on whether it should be part of a successful single currency early in the next Parliament, should the economic conditions be met. He described Labour's stance as practical and constructive and well in line with mainstream British opinion.

Time to clear up this electoral law muddle

RIDDELL ON POLITICS

THE sooner British parties and national elections are regulated the better. At present, we have a free-for-all of archaic laws dating back more than a century, or often no laws at all. Our electoral rules mainly date from the days when virtually all campaigning was local. The need for change is the common implication of three separate developments: yesterday's El Mujid, a Hong Kong entrepreneur to the Tory party; the consultative paper from the BBC, ITC and others on party political broadcasts; and the formation of a working party on electoral procedures.

The Hong Kong story, however bizarre and intriguing, is mainly historic because the Tories are now in opposition. And William Hague has already promised not to accept foreign donations, in line with government proposals. The Neill committee is reviewing the whole issue of party funding. But whatever proposals emerge, a regulator will be needed to supervise party accounts and to determine whether a donation comes from abroad or not.

Similarly, the debate about the future of political broadcasts is essentially a battle for control between the parties and the broadcasters. The present system is based on a mixture of precedent and legal obligations reinforced by informal understandings between the party whips. But this system is under challenge from both changes in broadcasting and in the creation of new elected bodies. The consultative paper contains several sensible suggestions for shifting the focus more to general and other election campaigns, and doing away with broadcasts outside campaigns, including at Budgets. The proposed guidelines for the content of broadcasts are also right. The paper merely seeks views on the election for a London mayor and rules out broadcasts for referendums in view of the difficulty of achieving fairness when parties are often divided.


The Tories and the Liberal Democrats have broadly welcomed the paper, but it has been strongly attacked by Labour on the grounds that there would be no party broadcasts for six months of the year, including at the time of annual conferences and the Budget. Labour does not want to give up its right to communicate directly with voters except at election time. "Broadcasters do not necessarily always know best", Labour's complaints are a bit rich given their skill in setting the media agenda. However, the real issue is who decides

be broad limits on expenditure) and for the elections to the Scottish parliament and Welsh assembly. Referendums are also becoming a regular rather than an occasional part of our political system.

The present haphazard arrangements no longer work. They were designed for the era of Gladstone, and perhaps Baldwin, not for the age of Millbank Tower and the permanent campaign. We need an independent electoral commission at arm's length from government to supervise parties and electoral procedures. This has for long been advocated by David Butler, the most experienced British student of elections, and has been backed by Tony Blair and Paddy Ashdown. Without such a commission, we risk having an even messier position than now.

PETER RIDDELL

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IN PARLIAMENT

Today in the Commons from 9.30am, backbench rebellion from 2.30pm, Welsh questions, Prime Minister's Questions, Government of Wales Bill, committee stage, debate on power cuts in North Wales over Christmas, in the Lords: debate on agriculture, drafting legislation.

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Engineers pull the plug on giant aqueduct

Russell Jenkins marvels at a one-day waterfall

A MAGNIFICENT torrent of water cascaded 120ft from Britain's biggest aqueduct yesterday to join the River Dee below.

Three British Waterways engineers pulled the plug on the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct, on the Llangollen Canal, near Trevor, in Wales, sending almost 450,000 gallons of water — enough to fill 8,000 baths — tumbling in a man-made waterfall.

Hundreds of sightseers turned out on a bright, chilly morning to watch the "dewatering" of the canal, emptied so engineers could inspect its 1,000ft length, discover the secrets of its longevity and carry out maintenance work.

The "waterway in the sky", built by Thomas Telford and completed in 1805 at a cost of £47,018, is a scheduled ancient monument and is both the longest and highest structure on the country's 2,000-mile waterway system. Narrow-boaters know it as the gateway to Wales.

The event was part of a £25 million engineering programme to boost tourism on the 200 canals for the millennium. Each year, canals attract 160 million visits but British Waterways hopes for more. Photographers and television cameramen were posi-



Telford completed the canal in 1805 for £47,000

tioned at strategic intervals on the banks to capture the precise moment the engineers hauled a metal chain to lift the sluice valve. Suddenly, water, which runs 5ft deep along an iron trough across the aqueduct, began to empty, the droplets forming a rainbow.

Roger Blanton, 78, a retired farmer from Whitchurch who has lived most of his life by the canal system, brought his family to watch. The aqueduct, he said, was "a work of spectacular art".

Howard Griffiths, one of the engineers who pulled the plug, waited for two hours for the

trough to empty. His next job was to rescue the bream, roach and perch left stranded.

The aqueduct, which enables the canal to join up with the Shropshire Union Canal, was used in its heyday to ferry coal from local collieries. Milk from Cheshire was also taken in horse-drawn express boats, called Shropsey Flies, to the chocolate factory in Bourneville, Birmingham.

The aqueduct, built by the Ellesmere Canal Company, was originally intended to link Liverpool and Bristol by inland waterway via the River Dee, Mersey and Severn. However, the local geology prevented the scheme being completed.

Even so, Pontcysyllte remains a testament to the vision of the founders of the Industrial Revolution. The aqueduct pioneered many features, not least the dovetail iron trough across the aqueduct, began to empty, the droplets forming a rainbow.

When the aqueduct was opened, a cannon fired a royal salute and 8,000 people watched the first boat cross. Since then the structure has remained virtually untouched, save for some refurbishment to the balustrade and towpath.

Harriet Hudson, economic development manager with British waterways, said canals remained vitally important as to the economies of local communities in attracting tourists. The basin above the aqueduct is home to a thriving narrow-boat business.

In the close season, from October to March, British Waterways is carrying out repairs and remedial work on its reservoirs and properties, including 4,763 bridges, 60 tunnels and 397 aqueducts.

Major refurbishment projects include £2.8 million being spent on Neptune's Staircase on the Caledonian Canal and £800,000 on restoring Lady Capel's Bridge, on the Grand Union Canal.



A man-made waterfall tumbles 120ft from the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct. Hundreds of sightseers watched

NEWS IN BRIEF

Ex-police chief was four times over limit

A former deputy chief constable with Merseyside Police was released on bail yesterday by magistrates at Kendal, Cumbria, after admitting driving while nearly four times over the limit.

David Howe, 54, of Kendal, who once headed the Cumbria force's traffic division and left the police in 1994, was arrested after crashing his car the day before Christmas Eve, the court was told. The hearing was adjourned for reports until February 10.

Fireman banned

A fire-engine driver who crashed on a 999 call on New Year's Eve was more than two times over the drink-drive limit. Paisley Sheriff Court banned John Thompson, 36, of Beith, Ayrshire, for 30 months and fined him £850.

Lake death arrest

A man was arrested by police investigating the death of Craig Totterdale, 19, found in a lake three months ago at Milton Keynes. He was thought to have taken Ecstasy at a rave club, but tests revealed no trace of the drug.

Fewer escapes

Escapes from prisons in England and Wales fell dramatically over the past five years, the Prison Service said. In 1992-93 the number was 232, in 1996-97 it was 33. The prison population rose by more than 12,000.

Paintings deal

Four French impressionist paintings have been accepted by the nation from an anonymous owner in lieu of £2.1 million inheritance tax. The pictures, two Monets, a Bonnard and a Modigliani, have been on loan since 1983.

Scope for profit

A seasonal income requiring little effort in attractive surroundings for £60,000: the Exeter vendors of 53 slot-machine telescopes with views of the English Riviera say they expect little trouble in finding a buyer.



Howard Griffiths, an engineer, prepares to pull the plug on the aqueduct, which took two hours to empty

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French food bible toasts great British pub grub

By Robin Young

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Andrew and Jacqui Petti at The Star yesterday. They took over the pub 18 months ago

'If you want curries, go to India'

Paul Wilkinson samples fare at a Yorkshire inn that makes the most of local produce

THERE are no meat pies on sale at The Star. Drinkers at the bar of this thatched 14th century former medieval monks' road-house can savour...

and herbs, or a main course of guinea-fowl breast with celeriac mash, chantrelle mushrooms and fino sherry for £9.95...

met here recently. But so one who comes in here is expected to eat... The Star is located on the edge of the Vale of York...

this already." Mr Petti comes from Whitby and after training locally worked in a hotel on the North York Moors before buying the pub...



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Evesham Vale advertisement for Cyrix 686MX computers. Features a laptop and text: 'Pleasure £599 Why Pay More? The Microware are proud to offer the best 'deal', but do they?'

Algiers bars massacre site to EU visitors

The dusty graveyard outside Sidi Hamed had more life yesterday than the empty, bloodstained streets of the village where Anthony Loyd met survivors of a bloody massacre earlier this month. Small groups of children wandered among the identical concrete gravestones, picking out the resting places of relatives, neighbours and friends. A dozen or so shovels lay discarded by exhausted hands across the torn earth of the cemetery that now spills into the field beyond. The killings in Sidi Hamed on the night of January 9 galvanised the European Union into sending representatives to investigate the atrocities that have left more than 1,100 dead during Ramadan. Last night the EU delegation flew out of Algiers, having been forbidden permission to visit the village, lay a wreath for the dead or express their sympathy to survivors. The Government also refused their call for United Nations investigators to be allowed to visit Algeria.

Soldiers abandon village to killers from mountains

IT was just after sundown that Sidi Hamed met its bloody fate. As darkness gathered, the villagers, living a scant 12 miles south of the capital, broke their fast and embarked upon the *iftar*, the traditional Muslim meal at the day's end.

‘I just remember screaming and the thump of blades’

Two groups entered Sidi Hamed. The first was dressed as civilian ‘patriot’ militiamen and government soldiers. They knocked on doors and told people to stay inside before moving in a pincer movement around the village, sealing it off. The second group wore the more traditional garb of the Armed Islamic Group, the GIA: Afghan-style baggy smocks and turbans. They were armed mostly with knives and axes, and began to enter houses systematically at the north end of the village and slaughter the inhabitants.

Mahdi, 51, was sitting in his courtyard with his wife, father and nine children. Masked men burst in from either end of the yard. They fired no shots but began to grab members of the family, cutting their throats or chopping at them with axes. ‘I cannot really tell you what happened,’ Mahdi said. ‘I just remember screaming and the thumping of blades.’ He scrambled over a wall with some of his family and fled into the dark. When he returned hours later with soldiers he found his father and three daughters dead in the yard. Another daughter was missing, taken away by the terrorists.

In the garage, those watching the film at first thought the screams were coming from the video until the door was blown open by explosives and masked men poured in. There is still blood all over the walls and fragments of the television screen, as well as a pathetic pile of shoes where people frantic to escape fought to scramble through two small windows at one end of the room: a child's handprint is clear in dried blood beneath the sill.

Four killed by bus blast in mass bombing campaign

Algiers: A bomb exploded inside a bus in the Algerian capital yesterday, killing four people and injuring 24. Several people were later hurt in a separate blast in Zeralda, west of Algiers.

Algiers transport system said the bus was probably placed in the bus on its route from the Champ de Manoeuvres neighbourhood, where a huge market is located, to Ben Aknoun. He said Algiers buses are systematically checked at the beginning and end of the line.

The bombs were apparently two of dozens found in packages, boxes and cars around Algiers over the last ten days. The Zeralda bomb was hidden in a shopping bag at a crowded covered market. The blast occurred in the late afternoon, and there were unconfirmed reports of some deaths.

In other violence, newspapers and residents in several locations reported yesterday that Islamic militants killed at least 38 people — including 15 stabbed on Monday in a bus at a fake police checkpoint 70 miles east of Algiers, near Bouira.

Witnesses and independent newspapers reported 23 other killings, most of them in areas south of Algiers. At least five were said to be teenagers. (AP/AFP)

Government troops at a base less than 500 yards away did nothing, but the EU delegates were not allowed here to ask why. Yesterday soldiers patrolling the village accused residents of being liars, and therefore terrorists. If they dared to suggest that the military had been complacent, the *sous-préfet*, a kind of deputy mayor, claimed that Britain was harbouring terrorists.

Ignored, even accused, the villagers of Sidi Hamed share these characteristics with the departing EU troika: they had done nothing in the civil war, neither actively supporting the Government nor the Islamists.

Letters, page 19



An Algerian villager digging a mass grave at Sidi Hamed, a village just 12 miles from the capital and the scene of the last of the Ramadan massacres in which more than 1,100 people have died

British minister regrets rejection of UN

Mr Fatchett expressed, in tones of wooden diplomacy, his sorrow at the rejection of the troika's suggestion that UN investigators be allowed to visit Algeria.

‘We had hoped,’ he said, ‘that the Algerian Government would agree to issue an invitation to the UN Special Rapporteurs from Geneva to visit, but they were not ready to do so. We regret this.’

Mr Fatchett's offer of EU humanitarian aid was left open without any specific response from the Algerian Government, which had reiterated only the accusation that Britain was being used as a base by terrorists.

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Advertisement for 'Pleasure' featuring a computer monitor and the text 'Cut the cost, not the cover. Call 0800 77 99 55'.

WORLD IN BRIEF

French libel fine is biggest for 20 years

Paris: A court imposed a Fr200,000 (£198,000) fine — the largest in a French libel case for 20 years — on the authors and publisher of a book which accused two former Cabinet ministers of ordering the contract killing of a Riviera MP. (Susan Bell writes).

Carey plea on African debt

Addis Ababa: The Archbishop of Canterbury called for Africa's crippling debt to be forgiven to mark the millennium. Dr George Carey urged representatives of the Organisation of African Unity and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa: ‘Have the moral courage to take the chains off Africa by relieving her of the burden of unpayable debt.’

Hungary rules out Euro delay

London: Hungary wants to begin accession negotiations in March and conclude them by the end of this year so that it can join the European Union by the turn of the century. Gyula Horn, the Prime Minister, has told Tony Blair (Michael Binyon writes). He said during a visit to London that he wants the EU to differentiate between the applicants so that if Hungary, with foreign capital amounting to £10.4 billion, reaches a quick agreement, it will not be held up by other applicants still in the process of negotiating.

Embassy vehicle fired on

Phnom Penh: Cambodian military police shot an American passenger in the buttocks and deflated a rear tyre when they fired at a marked US Embassy vehicle. Police said the incident happened during a chase in which a passenger suspected of misappropriating \$400,000 (£250,000) from a mining company was detained. An embassy spokesman said Cambodian officials had expressed regret over the incident. (AP)

Amman getaway cars found

Amman: Police have found the getaway cars used by the men who killed eight people, including an Iraqi diplomat and two Iraqi millionaires, at a businessman's house here at the weekend. Samir Mutawe, Jordan's Minister for Information, said the two vehicles were found in different districts of Amman; one had diplomatic licence plates and belonged to Hikmet al-Hijou, the Iraqi envoy here, who was stabbed to death. (AP)

Monks ease ban on women

Zaragoza: Monks have lifted a ban that kept women from viewing frescos painted by Francisco Goya in the Aula Dei monastery in Aragón province. The monks, members of the Roman Catholic Carthusian order, have decided to relax their 900-year ban on women and have accepted a local government proposal to build a visitors' entrance that will permit women to enter the building without being seen by the monks. (AP)

Discovery Channel advertisement for 'TITANIC: THE SEARCH FOR THE TRUTH'. Includes a list of depths (165ft to 13,000ft), a price tag of £29.99, and a coupon for ordering the video box set.

Advertisement for Prime Health insurance, featuring the text 'Cut the cost, not the cover. Call 0800 77 99 55'.

Cult family 'kills teenager to rid her of demons'

FROM TUNKU VARADARAJAN IN NEW YORK

A TEENAGE cheerleader, recently voted the girl "most likely to succeed" at her affluent suburban school, was allegedly suffocated to death with a plastic bag by her mother and sister in a chilling cult ritual to free her of "demons".

Charity Miranda, 17, was found dead by police at her home in Sayville, Long Island. Officers found her mother Vivian, 30, and her sister Serena, 20, chanting and praying over her prostrate body, both swaying as if in a trance.

Lieutenant John Gierasch, of Suffolk County police force, said: "The account given to us by the mother is that she believed the daughter was possessed by demons and this was an effort to rid her of those demons."

mother. According to Mr Gierasch, this created tension in the house that led eventually to Charity's death.

John Griek, a classmate of the dead girl, said that he noticed something was amiss when Charity lost 10lb in the last week. He said: "But her mother wouldn't take her to the doctor. She didn't believe in medicine."

Mrs Miranda, instead, believed that her daughter was possessed by the devil. According to police, she linked Charity's resistance to *santeria* with the presence in her mind of

'Vivian is a wonderful mother. Her children are her life. This is like a horror story'

"demons", which she tried to exorcise on several occasions. She "failed" to do so, prompting her to conclude — according to Mr Gierasch — that "the only recourse left was to kill this girl".

She is thought to have done this on Monday evening, after returning home from shopping. At 4-4:50pm Charity was in her bedroom, congratulating a friend by e-mail for winning a basketball game. She then logged off from her computer.

Minutes later, police say,

her mother and sister approached her, apparently pinning her down. They then placed a plastic bag over Charity's head, wound it tightly around her neck, and suffocated her to death. A third sister, Elizabeth, was in the house, but is not believed to have played a part in the killing.

Neighbours, relatives and friends were yesterday in a state of shock, unable to understand how the two could have been accused of such a crime. A woman who described herself as a close friend of Mrs Miranda said: "Vivian is a wonderful mother. Her children are her life. This is something out of a horror story."

The case has focused public attention on Cuban *santeria*, a cult that has a lower profile in America than the better known Haitian voodoo. While statistics show that there are some 600,000 US voodoo adherents, there are as yet no reliable figures for practitioners of *santeria*.

Unlike voodoo, which is practised openly and, in effect, the state religion of Haiti, the Cuban cult has always retained an "underground" status. The first evidence of its practice in the United States was detected in the 1940s among Cuban immigrants in Brooklyn.

That borough is still a stronghold of American *santeria*, with a profusion of private shrines to Changó, the god of thunder, regarded in the cult's pantheon as the alter ego of St Barbara.



Christian Slater, the film actor, washing a police car, one of his unpaid chores after being sentenced to 90 days at La Verne correctional centre, 30 miles east of Los Angeles, for drug abuse, assault and battery. A week ago he was at the premiere of his latest movie, *Hard Rain*

Unsinkable Titanic sails on to break all box-office records

FROM GILES WHITTALL IN LOS ANGELES

CRUSHING competition for the fifth week in a row, the most expensive film in history has broken all known records for box-office staying power.

In the four days to Monday's public holiday, *Titanic* took \$35.6 million

(£21.8 million), eclipsing the next three releases together, and becoming the first film to earn more than \$20 million on five consecutive weekends.

The voyage of *Titanic* from studio nightmare to box-office phenomenon has delighted Paramount Pictures, which bought the North American rights for \$65 million and has taken

nearly \$250 million. Last week the chilly epic — warmed only by a love affair played out by Kate Winslet and Leonardo DiCaprio — became the third fastest film after *Independence Day* and *Jurassic Park* to pass \$200 million.

With scant competition looming on Hollywood's horizon, *Titanic* is ex-

pected to pass Paramount's all-time box-office record holder, *Forrest Gump*, which made \$329 million in 1994. Twentieth Century Fox, which financed most of the \$200 million film, will take longer to break even. Experts estimate *Titanic* must earn at least \$500 million outside the US before Fox enjoys a profit.

World health official admits not holding qualifications

FROM PETER CAPELLA IN GENEVA

THE World Health Organisation was rocked by another controversy yesterday after reports that it misrepresented the qualifications of its second most senior official.

Officials declined to comment until they had seen a report by CBS television in which Fernando Antezana, the deputy director-general, admitted that he did not hold the qualifications he was publicly said to have and should not really be called a doctor.

Señor Antezana, 63, from Bolivia, joined the organisation 22 years ago. He was appointed to the No 2 post last May. When he was promoted

to the rank of assistant director-general in 1993, the organisation said he received "doctorates in biochemistry and pharmacology" from the University of San Simón in Bolivia, as well as diplomas in public health and international relations from Harvard University and in health technology from Stanford University.

The American television station found that San Simón does not run a doctorate. Stanford in California confirms that it could not find a record for Señor Antezana. The deputy director-general, who could not be reached for comment last night, told CBS that his Stanford diploma came from the University's

extension programme in Peru. Richard Leclair, a WHO spokesman, said there may have been confusion in the translations or international equivalents of the degrees.

Señor Antezana is in charge of programmes on the effectiveness of medicines and drugs. He also worked as a senior scientist and an adviser on drug policies. Last week he pulled out of the race to succeed Dr Hiroshi Nakajima as the head of the 191-nation health body in July.

Dr Nakajima's ten years in office have been marked by accusations of mismanagement. Critics also claim he has filled senior management positions with his own appointees.

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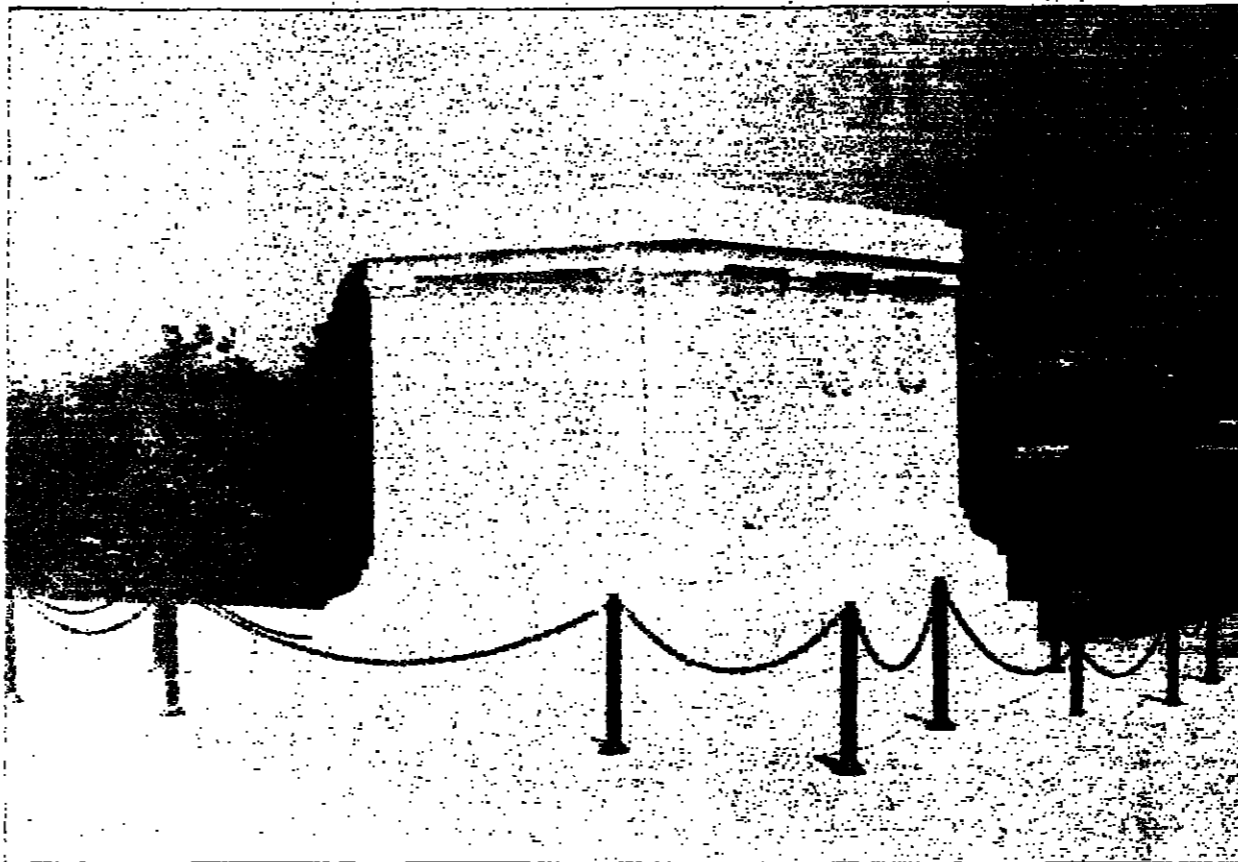
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Unknown warrior is named

Pentagon embarrassed by identity crisis over Vietnam pilot, write Michael Evans and Ian Brodie



The tomb of the unknown warriors at Arlington, Washington, now thought to contain known remains.



Disfigured 'Mother of Pain Maria'

Art vandal escapes in Germany

Bonn, Germany's galleries and museums stepped up security yesterday after a mentally disturbed art vandal escaped from a psychiatric hospital (Rog or Boyes writes). Hans-Joachim Buhlmann, now 66, sprayed works by Paul Klee and Albrecht Dürer — with sulphuric acid in the 1970s and 1980s. He caused millions of pounds of damage, fueling the attacks — apparently prompted by his wife's suicide — he threw acid again in 1988 in Munich when on day-release. Among the works sprayed was Dürer's 'Mother of Pain Maria'. Here Buhlmann was confined indefinitely to a hospital in Gelsenroff. On Monday he went for a walk in the grounds, and did not return.

PENTAGON officials were trying to decide yesterday how to deal with the embarrassing possibility that a serviceman buried in America's tomb of the unknown warrior is not unknown at all. CBS News said its seven-month investigation had determined that the remains in the memorial were almost certainly those of Michael Blassie, an air force pilot whose jet was shot down close to the Vietnam-Cambodia border in May 1972. "Everything points to the pilot," said his sister, Pat Blassie. Even more awkward for the Pentagon, activists among Vietnam veterans are convinced that officials concealed their knowledge of Blassie's identity in 1984 when they were under pressure to find "unknown" remains from Vietnam. Then in short supply for insertion in the tomb with victims of both world wars and the Korean War. One reason facing the Pentagon is the unrespected step of reopening the tomb at Arlington National Cemetery outside Washington to exhume the Vietnam remains for DNA testing. Careful thought would be given to this idea, the Pentagon said. Given the issue's sensitivity, a decision may go all the way to President Clinton. The month after Blassie's plane was shot down, a South Vietnamese Army pilot

found his identity card, money, shreds of a flight suit and a few skeletal remains. The money and card disappeared during transfer of the remains to a mortuary in Saigon. At an army identification laboratory in Hawaii, the bones were listed for the next eight years as "believed to be" Blassie's, but the laboratory could not be more positive. By 1990 the Pentagon faced a problem in finding Vietnam unknown remains for the tomb. Only three or four sets existed, including those believed to be Blassie's, and there were concerns that with the advance in identification techniques there might soon be no Vietnam candidate for Arlington's sarcophagus. But that same year, its remains still unexplained, an army review board declared that the bones were not Blassie's and gave them a new designation, N-26. According to a memo from the head of the laboratory, all documents referring to Blassie were removed from the N-26 file at Pentagon orders. On Memorial Day in May 1994, President Reagan attended the Arlington ceremony for the burial of N-26, asking: "Did he work, beside his father on a farm in America's heartland? Did he marry? Did he have children?" Not if it was her highly decorated brother, said his

Blassie at her home in St Louis. He was 21 when he was shot down in flames, single, single and a graduate of the Air Force Academy. His father was a butcher. Blassie's mother, Jean Blassie, said she just wants to know the truth. She said: "I'd like my son to have his own tombstone, with his name on it." The idea for a special tomb

for an unknown soldier to the Dean of Westminster and the idea was "very quickly taken up", according to Malcolm Brown, a historian and author of several books on the First World War. The proposal was approved by King George V and by Lloyd George and a body was brought home from the Western front. The body of the unknown soldier, was paraded through

the streets of London on a gun carriage on November 11, 1920, and taken to Westminster Abbey. The French emulated the idea. Mr Brown said it would be wrong to try to identify the unknown soldier. "The whole point is that he represents everyone who died without a name. It would be quite wrong for the unknown warrior to become the known warrior."

Carnival spirit as Cuba awaits the Pope

FROM TOM RHODES IN HAVANA

IN THE Plaza de la Revolución, the symbolic heart of President Castro's regime, the people of Havana last night gazed expectantly at the latest addition to their collection of martyrs: a huge portrait of Christ that now dominates this edifice to communism. On the eve of the visit today by the Pope, Cubans of all faiths gathered in the square that has been home to two very different heroes, José Martí, the father of independence, and Che Guevara, the guerrilla leader. The Christ figure and its message, "Jesus Christ in you we trust," eclipses both the statue of Martí and iron sculpture of Guevara. This is a significant test of faith in a land where symbolism reigns. "Che Guevara was a good man," said Lázaro López, a Presbyterian, as he strolled through the square. "But never in my life did I expect to see Jesus Christ in this square. I am just so happy that he is here too. It is a sign of hope." The message was the same in the faded grandeur of Havana's old town, along the waterfront, the Malecón, and in the cafés and bars of the Cuban capital where the first visit by a pontiff has engendered a carnival-like atmosphere of expectation. "Religion can open your eyes," said Enrique Ángel Valdez, 53, a builder. "The Pope can make a difference. He can communicate to all the Cuban people. I think it is possible that his visit will transform our country." However the Government, employing the state-controlled newspapers, television and radio stations, has sought to stage-manage the visit, portraying the Pope, a firm opponent of US sanctions, as an ally in the fight against American imperialism. Señor Castro and his senior aides have called for communists to attend each of the four Masses given by the Pope this week. Ricardo Alarcón, president of the National Assembly, referred to the Pope as the Holy Father and, in a state that was officially atheist until 1992, dismissed the religious persecutions of the past as a misunderstanding. But the Government and Church are still nursing over access to national television during the papal tour, and despite an easing in visa restrictions for foreign priests and signs of a major religious revival throughout Cuba, there are still complaints of repression.

Yeltsin presses on with military cuts

FROM RICHARD BEESTON IN MOSCOW

PRESIDENT YELTSIN said yesterday that Russia's military had cut the number of servicemen by 200,000 last year and that further radical cuts were now moving ahead largely unchallenged. In a rosy view of the deplorable state of the shrinking military, the Russian leader, who is the Commander in Chief of the armed forces, said that his controversial reform programme was working. "Military reform is marching on and our responsibility now is to get it into full swing," he told members of the Defence Council at a Kremlin meeting. "Resistance to reform [by] the military, politicians and even the Opposition has been overcome." Although at its Cold War peak the Kremlin's military machine once boasted nearly five million men in uniform, the collapse of the Soviet empire and budget cuts has

led to a dramatic drop in the size, competence and morale of the armed forces. Two years ago Mr Yeltsin vowed to reduce the military from 1.7 million to 1.2 million by the end of 1998, and to turn the conscript force into a professional army by 2000. Experts, however, said that estimating the true size of the Russian military is nearly impossible. Draft-dodging is widespread and hardly any units are at full strength or ready for combat. Moreover, Mr Yeltsin has not silenced his critics, particularly communists and nationalists who want Russia restored to a great military power. General sacked: President Yeltsin yesterday dismissed Russia's Air Force chief, General Pyotr Deinekin, who has been sharply criticised after a military cargo plane crashed into an apartment building last month. (AP)

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Mugabe sends troops to quell Harare riots

FROM JAN RAATH IN HARARE

PRESIDENT Mugabe's Government yesterday ordered troops into Zimbabwe's capital, Harare, to help outnumbered police to crack down after two days of rioting, looting and demonstrations against high food prices.

It is the first time military force has been used against urban unrest since the 1960s, when the then Rhodesian Government sent troops into the same townships to stop bloody political faction-fighting between black nationalist parties.

capitol without any public transport started as a convoy of troop-laden lorries and two armoured cars roared through the worst trouble-spots in Harare's southern townships.

Protesters signal popular uprising

FROM SAM KILEY IN CHITENGWISA TOWNSHIP

"ROBERT MUGABE is too stupid for words. There is no point in taking on the people with violence. By sending in the Army he is guaranteeing his own downfall," said Hudene Kaiboni, 32, a small businessman.

"The idea is ridiculous," said Morgan Tsvengirai, general secretary of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trades Unions. "There is no coordination behind the protests. It is rolling mass action."

Youths held up vehicles on main roads in the south of the city and robbed passengers. The mobs, which on Monday in Mbare township adjacent to the city centre reached 30,000, made clear their anger against Mr Mugabe.



Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum, the Emirates Defence Minister, meets Rama, a cross between llama and camel

Dubai scientists get over the hump with Rama the cama

BY NICK NUTTALL

THE first cross between a camel and a llama has been born in the United Arab Emirates, a team of British, Arab and Australian scientists reported yesterday.

Researchers, led by Dr Lulu Skidmore, formerly of Cambridge University, hope the animal may transform the economic life in developing countries rather like the mule, a cross between the horse and the donkey, has for centuries. "Camels

and llamas were one species 30 million years ago and we were trying to see if it was possible to put two species, separated for that long, back together," she said. "And also, if you get the attributes of the two animals, this may have benefits."

Advantages include the long fleecy coat of the llamas but the strength of the camel and a size somewhere in between the two. "It may also be able to live virtually anywhere as it has the camel's ability to survive hot conditions and the llama's to survive cold," Dr Skidmore said. Rama, who was born two weeks prematurely and is being bottle fed, has no hump, but the short ears and long tail of a camel.



George, left, and Charlie soon after their birth

US researchers clone calves

BY NIGEL HAWKES
SCIENCE EDITOR

AMERICAN researchers have cloned two calves, simultaneously introducing foreign genes into them, a step towards producing drugs for humans in cow's milk.

The calves, called George and Charlie, were born last week at a ranch in Texas. They are genetically identical and were made by a method that combines the techniques used by scientists at the Roslin Institute in Edinburgh to produce the cloned lambs, Dolly and Polly.

Like Dolly, the calves were produced from adult tissue, and like Polly they contain a foreign gene. Since cows pro-

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Turkish Cypriot leader boycotts British envoy

FROM MICHAEL THEODOULOU IN NICOSIA

BRITISH efforts to solve the long-running Cyprus problem suffered a sharp setback yesterday when Rauf Denktaş, the Turkish Cypriot leader, revealed that he would have no further dealings with Britain's special representative, Sir David Hannay.

He told *The Times* the move was in protest at the British Government's decision last week to demand that Turkish Cypriots apply for visas to enter the United Kingdom.

Mr Denktaş also said he would no longer participate in intercommunal talks and that any future United Nations-sponsored settlement negotiations with the Greek Cypriots would have to be between the two states. That would mean

international recognition for the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, which is recognised only by Ankara.

Mr Denktaş said the European Union had "destroyed the chances of a settlement" by agreeing to begin accession talks with Cyprus when the application was made unilaterally by the internationally recognised Greek Cypriot administration. Nor were the Turkish Cypriots interested in joining the accession negotiations, due to begin in April, while they were considered a minority.

"I am not going to see Sir David Hannay while the British Government is enforcing this visa nonsense on my people," Mr Denktaş said.

Britain announced last week it was withdrawing the right of people from Turkish-held northern Cyprus to enter the UK without visas after receiving nearly 1,000 unfounded applications for asylum in 1996 and 1997.

The Foreign Office said it had first learnt of the snub to Sir David from *The Times*. Mr Denktaş said that, on a personal level, he got on with Sir David "very well".

Britain, which now holds the European Union presidency, is expected to play a major role in a determined international attempt to resolve the

Cyprus problem in talks due to begin in March.

There is strong interest from both sides of the Atlantic. The EU is reluctant to accept Cyprus as a member while it remains divided by a Berlin-style wall, and America sees the densely militarised island as a major source of friction between its feuding Nato allies, Greece and Turkey.

Mr Denktaş claimed that the visa decision was a politically motivated move which Britain was using as a "big stick" to enforce Turkish Cypriot flexibility in the settlement process.

Mr Denktaş, who conceded that he now himself required a visa, interrupted the interview to instruct an aide to cancel a trip he had planned to England next month to take part in a debate at the Oxford Union.

"I cannot apply for a visa which I regard as an unjust requirement by the British Government on people who have done no wrong," he said.



Denktaş: will boycott intercommunal talks

Iraq strikes deal to broaden arms team

BY MICHAEL THEODOULOU

IN A development that could help to ease tension in the Gulf, the Iraqi Government announced yesterday it had struck a deal with Richard Butler, the United Nations chief weapons inspector, to introduce non-commission experts at technical talks next month.

The agreement addresses Iraqi complaints that the United Nations Special Commission on disarming Iraq is dominated by officials from America and Britain, whom it claims are hostile to Baghdad.

It was seen as only a small step forward and there was no word on whether Mr Butler had persuaded Iraq to comply with the UN's key demands. The Security Council wants President Saddam Hussein to open numerous sensitive sites to inspectors, to stop attempting to dictate the composition of the UN teams and to withdraw a threat to end all

co-operation with the UN commission unless sanctions are lifted by May. Mr Butler has rejected the "arbitrary" deadline and insisted it was in Iraq's power to have sanctions ended by co-operating fully with weapons inspectors.

He would not comment before going into a third round of talks last night with senior Iraqi officials led by Tariq Aziz, the Deputy Prime Minister. It was expected to be his last meeting before he leaves Iraq this morning and reports to the Security Council on Friday. As they met yesterday morning, thousands of Iraqis in orchestrated protests again took to the streets, vowing to fight if American forces attacked Iraq.

"We will chop off any hand which tries to touch Iraq," chanted the 5,000-strong crowd. "We are ready to sacrifice ourselves for our leader, Saddam Hussein."



Max Corkill and his cat, Rastus, who made an inseparable pair on his vintage Sunbeam as it purred around Christchurch, New Zealand, were killed yesterday in a collision with a car near New Plymouth

Defiant Suharto to stay in office

FROM A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT IN JAKARTA

PRESIDENT SUHARTO of Indonesia announced yesterday that he would seek re-election for a seventh five-year term on March 10, despite the country's worst economic crisis for 30 years.

The 76-year-old former general ended months of speculation when he agreed to be nominated. His victory is now seen as a foregone conclusion.

"His decision was entirely predictable," one Indonesian analyst said. "He wants to die in office, even though his family would like him to step down."

Last November the country was shaken by rumours that Mr Suharto was dangerously unwell. Attention has now turned to whom he will choose to be the next Vice-President, as the holder will be seen as his chosen successor. Speculation focused on Jusuf Habibie, the Research and Technology Minister.

Gold seized: Indonesian customs seized 440lb of gold worth about £1.2 million from three people trying to leaving the country. (AFP)

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The powerful force of sibling rivalry

In the third extract from their extraordinary book *Baby Wars*, Dr Robin Baker and Elizabeth Oram explain the roots of family conflict

Sibling rivalry is one of the more obvious manifestations of "baby wars". Few people have not seen or experienced for themselves the variety of ways in which brothers and sisters compete with each other. They bicker, fight and take each other's possessions. Occasionally, they even kill each other.

Whatever their ages, they can usually find something to fight over, and rivalry can begin early. Most children are safe while still in the womb — except for twins, who may each try to gain the lion's share of the nutrition or jostle for the best position.

As babies and toddlers, siblings compete for their parents' attention and affection; then they add food and toys, or even just the best place to sit or stand, to their list of things to squabble over. As young children and early teenagers, they vie with each other over space and parental gifts, and as late teenagers they may compete for friends of the same and the opposite sex, as well as for more material things such as access to the family car. As adults they may compete for their inheritance. Sibling rivalry is a powerful force from birth until death.

There is nothing uniquely human about it, nor is it a new phenomenon. Every offspring of every animal that lives in families, be it mammal, bird or insect, exhibits sibling rivalry, and the basic explanation is simple. Each sibling is trying to maximise its own reproductive output and is prepared to do everything it can to succeed, even if it means compromising the success of its brothers and sisters.

In part, this means that it must try not to alienate its parents too much by grossly disrupting their overall strategy. To do so will be counterproductive, if they then disfavour that child. Up to a point, also, a child must not alienate its siblings too much as they can be useful, if only to borrow clothes from.

Generally, siblings can often each do better in contests within their peer group if they co-operate rather than act alone. They can also exert greater pressure on their parents if they act together. So sibling relationships are a tightrope between co-operation and conflict, and the most successful children are those who tread this tightrope with the greatest care.

Rivalry takes time and energy and risks alienating the rest of the family. For example, how much food, space, money, support and attention there is to go round will be a central issue. We might expect sibling rivalry to be greatest in fam-

ilies from low socio-economic groups. With a relatively little cake, there is greater pressure on all to get as big a slice as they can. Rivalry should be at its lowest level in families from high socio-economic groups, but even here it will still be a feature of family life. However large a share of the resources a child manages to win, it will always benefit from having more — fierce sibling rivalry over the inheritance of large family fortunes is the stuff of life as well as of drama.

Three other factors will influence the extent of rivalry between any two siblings: the difference in age, whether they are of the same sex and how they are related genetically. The first two are straightforward. The closer siblings are in age, the more their needs

overlap, the greater the pressure to compete and the more even their chances. Similarly, siblings of the same sex also have more to gain from competing — their needs overlap more than they would if they were brother and sister. The third factor, however, is not so simple and is much farther-reaching: the level of conflict depends on relatedness. Rivalry is greatest between step-siblings, next greatest between half-siblings, then full siblings and least intense between identical twins.

The restraining force on these sibling contests derives from those of their children. Evolution has programmed parents to referee the contests between their children according to rules that promote the parents' total reproductive output rather than any individual child's. Natural selection will favour parents who observe, intervene and orchestrate where necessary so as to maximise the number of grandchildren they obtain. This simply means that parents gain most from ensuring that none of their children suffers too badly from sibling rivalry.

Some of the time, parents will do this by being even-handed, by striving to give all

of their children as equal a footing as possible. At other times, they will take the more positive action of supporting the weak and restraining the strong. The advantage of equalising the children's potential is that, up to a point, each is an equal ticket in life's lottery for the award of grandchildren. There are random elements, such as accident and disease, that can strike any child at any time. In this respect, which of the children survive to adulthood really is a matter of chance. When a child dies, those parents who have refereed their children's rivalry to ensure that the survivors have had as good a start in life as the dead child will still be reproductively the most successful. Those who have favoured a particular child, who then dies, will be left with ill-prepared survivors, the unsupported victims of their sibling's rivalry, and will be less successful in their total production of grandchildren.

A difference in genetic potential between their children is not the only reason parents may show favouritism. Birth order can also be a factor. In many cultures the lion's share of parental lands and resources has been inherited by the eldest child. In Western societies, the favoured child was usually the eldest son. In some agricultural societies, it was often the eldest daughter. In yet others it was simply the eldest.

Favouritism based on birth order is unsurprising to an evolutionary biologist. An individual's reproductive success is properly measured not by the number of children or grandchildren, but by reproductive rate. A person can, for example, have twice the reproductive rate of another sibling by producing twice as many grandchildren in the same length of time, or by producing the same number of grandchildren, but in half the time.

One way in which parents can attempt to increase their reproductive rate is to give every advantage to their eldest child in the hope that he or she will be reproductively successful; because if their oldest child is reproductively the most successful, they have more grandchildren sooner and the parental reproductive rate is likely to be greater than if any other of their children is the most successful.

While natural selection was predisposing parents to favour their eldest child, all else being equal, it was simultaneously predisposing children for sibling rivalry in a way that has had fascinating consequences. Pains-taking biographical and questionnaire work extending over 20 years has enabled



There is nothing uniquely human about sibling rivalry. It is exhibited by every offspring of every animal that lives in families, be it mammal, bird or insect

scientific historians to discover that birth order has a big influence on a person's character. In soliciting parental support, first-borns typically imitate parental behaviour and attitudes. Later-borns then need to differentiate themselves from their elder siblings. This drives them naturally into a position of opposition, to adopt stances that are in some sense revolutionary. Put simply, first-borns are conservative, later-borns are rebellious.

In essence, everybody is genetically programmed, first to determine his or her position in the family hierarchy, then to respond accordingly. And the appropriate response is: if a first-born, adopt parental values; if a last-born,

question parental values; and if somewhere in between, compromise. The response of later-borns can do nothing to reduce parental favouritism towards first-borns, because such favouritism is often in the later-borns' interests. What the later-borns' response does do, however, is define a stance around which they can develop and hone a consistent array of behaviour patterns. Essentially, they seek the opportunities and resources overlooked by their parents and older siblings, seeking to excel in novel and unexpected ways.

So far, we have discussed parental favouritism as if mother and father will always be in agreement over which child is most promising. But this is not always the case.

Whereas the mother can have equal confidence that all of her children are vehicles for her genes, her partner cannot, and this in part explains one of the features of parental favouritism; fathers are more likely to show favouritism than are mothers. A father's treatment of his children can be very strongly biased according to how confident he is that this or that child is actually his genetic offspring.

Even if his conscious appraisal is that all of his partner's children are equally likely to be his, his body may evaluate each child's characteristics differently. The apparently illogical empathy that he may feel for one child rather than another may well be the outcome of his body's

appraisal of paternal certainty.

Parents can implement their preferences in two ways — by acting positively towards a favoured child or negatively towards a disfavoured one. On the whole, parents are most likely to show the positive face of favouritism when the family's circumstances are buoyant, the negative one when circumstances are poor.

Sometimes, when the behaviour of the disfavoured child threatens the reproductive success of the favoured child, the parent might see violence or murder as the only solution. And such extreme behaviour is most likely when there are few resources in the family to go round. In other words, parental mistreatment

of children is most common in low socio-economic groups.

Times readers can buy *Baby Wars* by the university dons Robin Baker and Elizabeth Oram (bestselling authors of *Sperm Wars*) for just £11.99 (RRP £12.99, Fourth Estate) by calling The Times Bookshop on 0990 134 459.

TOMORROW

Why women suffer from postnatal depression

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Tunku Varadarajan on America's new capitalists

Generation vex

First the revisionists got their teeth into Sir Winston Churchill. Then they set to work on dear old Dr Alfred Kinsey. Now they have tackled, and rewritten, an entire generation.

New studies reveal that "Generation X", the most maligned age-group in postwar America, is richer, immensely more wise and rather more responsible than their elders had previously believed.

Their label, when first applied to them, was intended to be dismissive. They were not called Generation B, or F, or T. Instead, plucked especially for their own bowels of the alphabet, was the letter employed so often to denote a cipher, a puzzle or a nobody.

Used to define those born between 1963 and 1977, the letter X is now arguably a descriptor. Douglas Coupland, in his 1991 handbook-cum-novel, *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture*, slapped the label on to a group of people with "low pay, low status and low future".

But the Generation X title has a longer, though suitably dingy, pedigree: it had been seized upon by the eponymous Seventies punk group after one of the band members saw it on the cover of a 1960s novel by Charles Hamblett lying on his mother's bookshelves.

Coupland's Generation X-ers were born in the wake of the insouciant Baby Boomers, who inherited a prosperous world only to rebel against it. The X-ers have for long been stereotyped as slackers and geeks, and otherwise written off for whining about an unlucky world in which ill-paid, low-prospect "McJobs" were the norm, gormlessness the flavour, and MTV cartoon characters such as Beavis and Butt-head the unsavoury icons.

Yet all this has now changed, as the US News & World Report, an American weekly, reported recently. According to the magazine, which based its findings on extensive interviews with sociologists and financial experts, it is now "boom time for Generation X". They are young urban failures no longer.

The generation is proving considerably smarter than the one that preceded it. According to the study, some 60 per cent of X-ers are now actively saving for their retirement, which is now some 30 years distant.

Generation X is preparing for its future with a resolve unmatched by the "money can't buy me love" Baby Boomers in their heyday. The magazine reports: "In 1974, 51 per cent of young adults surveyed said they were interested in saving money for retirement, compared with nearly 70 per cent of X-ers' today."

Boomers, raised in postwar prosperity and growing up unaffected by economic angst, were spendthrifts par excellence. Generation X-ers never had any expectations of an easy life.

In a new book published in America — *Rocking the Ages*, by J. Walker Smith and Ann Clurman — the fast-maturing X-ers who came of age in the wake of the savings-and-loan debacle of the Eighties and the recession of the early Nineties.

To add to the psychological pressure, about 40 per cent of them are the children of divorced parents.

"This is a generation of pragmatists," say the book's authors. "Money is not strictly for saving or spending, but for protecting against the unexpected. They are very aware that nothing is forever."

Driven, perhaps, to insulate themselves from the unexpected, members of this generation now comprise 20 per cent of all American investors, and their share is growing apace. There is more to the cohort is increasingly materialistic, and has a combined purchasing power of \$125 billion.

As clinching proof of their new-found status as bastions of American economic conservatism, a higher percentage of X-ers than members of any other generation now say they agree with the statement that: "The only really meaningful measure of success is money."

Put simply, X-ers would rather give Beavis and Butt-head a kick in the pants than even watch them on television. In the great alphabet soup of life, X is now a letter to be swallowed whole, not spat out.



Coupland: X-ers were geeks

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CHANGING TIMES

defence

Nigella Lawson

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Erica Wagner introduces the latest extracts from Ted Hughes's revelatory *Birthday Letters*

Hughes watches helpless as Plath embraces suicide

The Bee God

Taste of honey is bittersweet

In June 1962 Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes began keeping bees at their Devon home. "We placed the hive in a sheltered out-of-the-way spot in the orchard," she wrote to her mother. "The bees were furious from being in a box. Ted had only put a handkerchief over his head where the hat should go in the bee-mask, and the bees crawled into his hair, and he flew off with half-a-dozen stings. I didn't get stung at all,

and when I went back to the hive later, I was delighted to see bees entering with pollen sacs full and leaving with them empty. At least I think that's what they were doing." But for Plath this was more than a country pursuit: her fascination with the bees was a reflection of her obsession with her father, Otto Plath, an entomologist who had made bees his special study. In October she wrote her famous

sequence of bee poems, as well as the sinister and angry *Daddy*, the work whose presence shadows *The Bee God*: "There's a stake in your fat black heart/ And the villagers never liked you./ They are dancing and stamping on you./ They always knew it was you./ Daddy, daddy, you bastard, I'm through."

When you wanted bees I never dreamed
It meant your Daddy had come up out of the well.

I scoured the old hive, you painted it,
White, with crimson hearts and flowers, and bluebirds.

So you became the Abbess
In the nunnery of the bees.

But when you put on your white regalia,
Your veil, your gloves, I never guessed a wedding.

That Maytime, in the orchard, that summer,
The hot, shivering chestnuts leaned towards us.

Their great gloved hands again making their offer
I never know how to accept.

But you bowed over your bees
As you bowed over your Daddy.

Your page a dark swarm
Clinging under the lit blossom.

You and your Daddy there in the heart of it,
Weighing your slender neck.

I saw I had given you something
That had carried you off in a cloud of gutturals -

The thunderhead of your new selves
Tending your golden mane.

You did not want me to go but your bees
Had their own ideas.

You wanted honey, you wanted those big blossoms
Clotted like first milk, and the fruit like babies.

But the bees' orders were geometric -
Your Daddy's plans were Prussian.

When the first bee touched my hair
You were peering into the cave of thunder.

That outsider tangled, struggled, stung -
Marking the target.

And I was flung like a headshot jackrabbit
Through sunlit whizzing tracers

As bees planted their volts, their frudding electrodes,
In on their target.

Your face wanted to save me
From what had been decided.

You rushed to me, your dream-time veil off,
Your ghost-proof gloves off.

But as I stood there, where I thought I was safe,
Clawing out of my hair

Sticky, disembowelled bees,
A lone bee, liked a blind arrow,

Soared over the housetop and down
And locked onto my brow, calling for helpers

Who came -
Fanatics for their God, the God of the Bees.

Deaf to your pleas as the fixed stars
At the bottom of the well.

Behind the smiles, a passionate marriage finally falls apart



Plath with Frieda, left, and Nicholas, above, in December 1962

Night-Ride on Ariel

Priestess of her own cult

Ted Hughes and Sylvia Plath separated in autumn 1962. That summer Aurelia Plath had come to stay with them in Court Green; she was watching when, one day in July, Plath brought letters and papers belonging to Hughes down from his study and burnt them in the garden. That summer, too, Hughes had begun an affair with Assia Wevill, who, with her husband, the Canadian poet David Wevill, had taken over the flat in Chalcot Square, where the Hugheses had lived before going to Devon. After the burning, Plath confronted her husband. Hughes left Court Green in late September. Plath stayed on until December; during that period she produced 40 of the *Ariel* poems on which her greatest reputation rests. To her mother she wrote: "I am a writer. I am a genius of a writer; I have it in me. I am writing the best poems of my life they will make my name." As winter approached she decided to leave Devon for London; Hughes helped her to hunt for a flat. But she was on her own when she saw that there were flats to let at 23 Fitzroy Road, in Primrose Hill, a house where Yeats had lived. She moved in on December 12; friends noticed the change in her. As Al Alvarez has written: "She seemed different. Her hair, which she usually wore in a tight, school-mistress bun, was loose. It hung straight to her waist like a tent, giving her pale face and gaunt figure a curiously desolate, rapt air, like a priestess emptied out by the rites of her cult." Plath committed suicide on February 11, 1963. In *Night-Ride on Ariel*, Hughes echoes the imagery that drives her late poems and reflects on the women who influenced her. The novelist Olive Higgins Prouty paid for her scholarship to Smith and her 1953 stay in a private mental asylum; Ruth Beutcher was the psychiatrist who helped her there and with whom she would always keep in contact; and Mary Ellen Chase was a faculty member at Smith who backed her application for a Fulbright Scholarship.

Your moon was full of women.
Your moon-mother there, over your bed,
The Tyrolean moon, the guttural,
Mourning and remaking herself.
It was always Monday in her mind.
Prouty was there, tender and buoyant moon.
Whose wands of beams so dainty
Put the costly sparkle
Into Cinderella. Beutcher
Moon of dismemberment and resurrection
Who found enough parts on the floor of her shop
To fill your old skin and get you walking
Into Tuesday. Mary Ellen Chase,
Silver nimbus lit, egg eyes hooded,
The moon-owl who found you
Even in England, and plucked you out of my nest
And carried you back to college,
Dragging you all the way, your toes trailing
In the Atlantic.

Phases
Of your dismal-headed
Fairy godmother moon. Mother
Making you dance with her magnetic eye
On your Daddy's coffin
(There in the family film). Prouty
Waiting you to the ballroom of broken glass
On bleeding feet. Beutcher
Twanging the puppet strings
That waltzed you in air out of your mythical grave
To jig with your Daddy's bones on a kind of tightrope
Over the gap of your real grave.

Mary Ellen Moon of Massachusetts
Struck you with her chiming claw
And turned you into an hourglass of moonlight
With its menstrual wound
Of shadow sand. She propped you
On her lectern.
Lecture-timer.

White-faced bolts
Of electrocuting moonlight -
Masks of the full or over-full or empty
Moon that tipped your heart
Upside down and drained it. As you flew
They jammed all your wavelenghts
With their criss-cross instructions,
Crackling and dragging their blacks
Over your failing flight,
Hauling your head this way and that way
As you clung to the sun - to the last
Shred of the exploded dawn
In your fist -

That Monday.

TOMORROW

The final extract: Ted Hughes reflects on the sorrow and the joy Plath brought him

© Ted Hughes, 1998. Extracted from *BIRTHDAY LETTERS* by Ted Hughes published by Faber and Faber Ltd. at £14.99 on 29 January 1998. It is available to Times readers now by calling the Times Bookshop on 0990 134 459

In defence of the smug married

I say the word millennium without appending the word "dome", am I allowed to broach the subject? Here we are, then, approaching the end of the decade which, the sober morning after the one before, we said was going to be all about sharing and caring, and with a Government that got voted in on the breeze of wised-up communitarianism. And what is the real truth?

Not only are more people living alone than ever before but, as we edge over that zero-happy date-line, record numbers of us will be ensconced in one-person households. We get married later, divorced sooner, stay single for longer and, increasingly, for ever. The future is unmistakably solo.

In other words, being single is modern, is cool, is better. Anyway, that's what single people tell us. People like me, whose households have more of the ambience of a Bangladeshi slum than the Conran-fitted and contemporary monastic cell, are looked

upon with horror, in appalled fascination. How can we live like that? This, of course, is the age of the control freak, so no wonder the diffuse and messy multiple household - *This Life and Friends* apart - causes such panic.

The degree of defensiveness of both parties, the Singletons and, to quote from Helen Fielding's brilliant conception *Bridget Jones, the Smug Marrieds*, is, in a sense, a distraction from the real issue. Most people are naturally suited

Nigella Lawson



either more to solitude or to permanent-enforced company. The difficulty now is that we have all got so insecure, all wanting, like attention-deprived children, the approval of others, that we regard anyone's choosing a different life from our own as a personally aimed, criticism of ourselves. The egomania of the age leads to paranoia and its

concomitant lurching distortions. To some extent, it is those of us in the maligned married camp who have drawn most comfort from the Bridget Jones persona, that - now officially ratified - embodiment of our times.

Let me put it like this. It becomes apparent that the secret fear of the single woman is that her married friends pity her. I'm afraid they do, deep down, every couple-bound woman is convinced that her single friends really envy her. No matter how often the fashionably solo protest they love, love, love their life, don't understand how anyone could share a bathroom, a kitchen, a telephone bill with anyone else, gaze around with unconcealed horror at the unhip accessories of the child-ridden home and generally look patronisingly at their married friends' life of domestic unfreedom, we are not convinced. Why, we think, do they bang on about it so? Live and let live is one thing, but live and crudely, defensively advertise the fact is another. Why, then, be surprised if inwardly we chuck knowingly to ourselves?

The truth is, we smug marrieds have only ourselves to blame. When faced with the oversized joys of the single life, we are so fearful of sounding patronising ourselves, so anxious not to let the real truth of our pity slip out, that we overcompensate. We moan about the constrictions of domesticity, the irritations of cohabitation, the longings we have for solitude and a one-bedroom flat. We don't mean,



Cohabitation is cool in *Friends* but cluttered in reality

it, or not for more than ten minutes at a time, but we do it to please, to make our friends feel that really they have a jolly enviable life. We say "poor us" because we feel "lucky us". But what happens? They take us at face value.

That may be true, but there are, I admit, other truths, too. There are moments when we do envy the selfish life of the single person, the lie-ins, the lack of compromise, the freedom, the spontaneity. Or some people do. I am not built, however, for the single life and, even if I did live by myself for most of my twenties, never really had one. I am ineluctably domestically inclined, incapable of turning solitude into a contemporary art: there's not a one-night stand I can't draw out for three years, or rather couldn't, and not even on purpose.

That, of course, goes right against the Zeitgeist. Which is, partly, too, why those of us who are not proudly single keep quiet about the fact. We know the modern mantra - I need my own space - and if we can't chant, keep wisely silent. It seems, when viewed or heard against the modern ethos, so intellectually and morally flabby, so pathetic and throwbackish somehow, to be someone who

An honest argument

WHETHER Frank Dobson is flashing his credentials as a Plain Speaker or disingenuously allowing the Government to push through laxer laws on abortion without getting its hands dirty is anyone's guess. But it is obvious that he is speaking honestly and from his conscience: whatever his political motives may be, that can still be the case.

What's more, he makes an honest point. Why continue to insist on the guarantee of two doctors that continuing a pregnancy would harm the putative mother's health, when that very premise is a dishonest one? Whether one, two or 50 doctors so testify, the point is that abortion is not a matter of protecting the woman's health. And I say this, with all due discomfort and qualification, as a pro-abortionist. I believe in fighting the fight, but not dishonestly.

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A Chinese take-away of liberty

Michael Gove on a McCarthyite campaign against private funding

The whiff of the opium den apparently hangs about Smith Square this morning. The revelation that the Conservatives, when in power, took £1 million from the family of a Chinese drug tycoon, Ma Sik-Chun has given Labour a new offence to put on the Tories' charge sheet of dealing with the dodgy.

The real with which Labour are pursuing this matter — deploying one of their safest pairs of hands, Stephen Byers, to deliver the blows — points to the significance of this "scandal" in the completion of new Labour's project. Labour are deliberately, and understandably, exploiting this story as part of a broader campaign to nationalise politics and neuter future opposition.

Labour wish to so discredit the funding of political parties by private individuals as to create an unstoppable momentum for capping private donations and introducing state funding. The key tactic in their campaign is the demand that the Tories disclose the names of all the party's significant donors in the last Parliament. It is a demand that the Tories cannot accede to, but their refusal is used by Labour to plant in the public mind the suspicion that the Tories have a great deal to hide.

The Ma affair is only one rotten apple, they imply, in a pork barrel sufficed with them. But, far from being an appeal to honour, Labour's demand is an invitation to sin.

The Tories can, in honour, no more reveal what their donors have done than the priest can reveal the secrets of the confessional. Labour's campaign is monetary McCarthyism.

The strategy of smear by association and the demand that confidences be breached in the name of some higher good is odious. Tory surrender would be shameful. It might be politically convenient for the Tories to throw the names of their former donors to the wolves, the better to "draw a line" under the whole affair. It would, however, be a breach of principles fundamental to the rule of law — the sanctity of contracts and respect for confidence — in the interests of political advantage. The Tories will not recover their good name with acts of bad faith.

They may begin to, however, with a proper show of principled robustness. The Tories have promised not to accept foreign money and to be open about all future donations over £5,000. As a defensive position that is perfectly sound. Now the Tories should go on the attack.

They should reiterate that all the accusations of "steals" came from men who thought they could buy favours and were disappointed. Hell may have no fury like a funder scorned, but the anger of Mr Ma, Asil Nadir and Mohamed Al Fayed is that of the cad who thinks a girl might mean yes even though she says no if enough money is lavished on her. They are political Angus Digbies.

Even though it was emphasised that cash could

not buy concessions, the corrupters tried anyway. More fool them for their persistence in wickedness.

The only occasion in recent memory when a generous political donor has seen policy bend to his will has been Bernie Ecclestone's successful seduction of Tony Blair. I believe that it was Mr Ecclestone's arguments rather than his wad which impressed the Prime Minister, but others take a less charitable view of the decision to exempt Formula One from the ban on tobacco sponsorship.

The Ecclestone episode may suggest that Labour are hurling bricks at the Tories from a transparently glass house, but for the long-term thinkers in new Labour almost anything which furnishes private donations to parties serves the broader purpose of advancing the case for state funding.

It may seem a perverse stance, when business is queuing up to swell Labour's coffers, but the party's strategists realise that the wheel will, eventually, turn as it does in all democracies and new Labour will lose the support of its new friends. State funding, like the state pension, is insurance against that rainy day.

Even more attractively, it offers liberation from the party's traditional paymasters in the trade unions. State funding might seem attractive to the Tories, in their current impoverished condition, but, as the fate of the nationalised industries showed, it is a drug as addictive and debilitating as anything Mr Ma peddled. Why should a party which believes welfare reform is a "noble cause" wish to become part of the dependency culture?

The Tories cannot, in honour, reveal past party donors

Politicians, especially Tories, should believe in a free market in ideas above all else. They should have sufficient confidence in their principles to know they can attract cash because individuals wish to invest in their ideology, not buy favours.

Politicians, especially Tories, should also defend the right of individuals to spend money as they wish, in support of any cause or project in which they believe. To make the formulation and spreading of political messages the business of organisations funded by the State, and to limit the freedom of individuals to fund political parties, is deeply, poisonously, illiberal.

What if all the major parties agreed on an issue, such as European integration, or abortion? How could the other side of the case be heard except by private individuals spending money? And why should there be a limit on how much they can spend, as discreetly as they wish, supporting the party of their choice in the campaign that matters to them? Do we not wish to let a thousand flowers bloom?

If this country limits the capacity of individuals to donate to parties and introduces state funding, we may have waved goodbye to Chinese money only to import Chinese politics.



CHASING THE DRAGON ...

Rape of the landscape

Prescott has left Britain's green belt at the mercy of his Panzer divisions in bulldozers

Not, not Northern Ireland, nor elected mayors, nor beef-on-the-bone, nor even welfare reform. The most far-reaching decision to emerge from the Blair Government is "Stevenage". Its author this week was the Environment Secretary, John Prescott. The effect is to abandon all green-belt zoning round London and other cities.

The county of Hertfordshire is to be allowed, without public inquiry, to build a new town in London's green belt west of Stevenage. As a result, Mr Prescott has forged that most crushing of planning tools, a precedent. The whole point of the green belt was that it was not open to case-by-case argument and incremental erosion. It was inviolable. Britain's green belts are more than violated. They face gang rape.

Mr Prescott is inviting all planning committees to cave in to speculators who have built up rural land banks against just this decision. Champagne corks must be popping at the House-Builders' Federation. The 1970s office boom and the 1980s hypermarket boom is to be repeated with rural housing estates. But whereas speculative offices replaced buildings, estates replace countryside. They submerge land protected for 50 years as a linear national park, land in which town-dwellers can walk, play and feel a breath of air.

The Stevenage decision will be replicated by planning inspectors across the land. Planners will now be inclined to allow green-belt estates since they may be liable for costs if a refusal is overruled by Mr Prescott. Every acre of green belt has thus acquired "potential". A British planning innovation, loved by the public and imitated and admired the world over, is to end in a speculative boom of the sort that Labour would once have damned.

I remember being taken as a boy to see the interwar estate of Peacehaven on the Sussex Downs near Brighton. This grid of private bungalows was gloriously situated on a sweep of wild hills by the sea. It was a visual outrage. Peacehaven became a byword for philistine development and a catalyst for the introduction of town and country planning.

Now a thousand Peacehavens are to bloom. Since the late Nicholas Ridley, Environment Secretary at the end of the 1980s, reversed the previous presumption against building on rural land, private estates

have sprawled across England as never before. This sprawl is now more extensive, I am told, even than in the 1930s. Countryside roughly the size of Bristol disappears under concrete each year. Southern England outside the national parks is, to all intents and purposes, unplanned. If a developer is turned down one year, he need only try again the next.

Most Britons notice only the estate at the bottom of their own garden. Criss-crossing Britain by car last summer, I was shocked at the ubiquity of these bland estates. Shires such as Hertford, Bedford, Northampton and southern Hampshire are becoming continuous suburban villages. Fly over them at night and they are giant cobwebs of sodium. Rural pockets linger on, but like pieces lost from a concrete jigsaw. Mr Prescott is still parroting the Tory cry that England "needs" between four and five million new homes over the next 20 years. On this basis he is ordering counties to meet targets of ridiculous specificity: 12,800 houses here, 13,000 there, 50,000 elsewhere. London apparently needs another 630,000 houses. This is economically illiterate.

To ask how many houses are "needed" in any community is as half-baked as to ask how many rooms are needed, or how many cars, or nannies, or holiday homes. The five million figure, normally beloved of the building lobby, comes from a demographic model of spurious objectivity called "household formation". This collates forecasts of deaths, cohabitations, divorces, immigration and the desire of single people to live away from their parents. These forecasts are deftly turned into needs, which planners must then "supply" at any cost, including to the countryside.

No allowance is made for any fluidity between the variables. None is made for movements in price or housing subsidy. Nobody knows how many council houses are empty or underused, any more than they know

how many homes might be found in existing houses by changing tax allowances, or single-parent benefit. The figures cannot embrace demand and supply of second homes, relevant in many green-belt areas. As for the "total need for affordable housing", the mind boggles. A more reputable profession than statistics would have Mr Prescott's planners "struck off" now. Yet these are the ghoulies abetting the rape of the landscape.

Transport ministers would be torn apart if they demanded more countryside to meet a rising need for roads. Even the Department of Health now rations by price. We no longer supply legal aid on demand. We do not offer unlimited Tube, train, supermarket, opera houses or caviar because people profess to need them. Why should we treat living space in any other way? Perhaps the Department of the Environment will declare a national need for second homes, as the Transport Department once did for second cars. I find it hard to believe modern government can be so primitive.

A measure of the lunacy can be gauged by driving along the north bank of the River Tyne. You pass acres of postwar estates built on what was open country, many of them now vandalised and boarded up. Such estates exist in every big city, victims of the last Whitehall idea for "meeting housing need", the on-of-town estate and the residential high-rise. These estates, often built in attractive country at public expense, are chronically in need of rehabilitation. Yet on Tyne-side Mr Prescott is expected to permit 2,500 new houses in the adjacent green belt outside Gosforth. The reason is crude: building outside Gosforth is more profitable.

If Mr Prescott is directing people to live in the green belt with price no object, why not direct them to North Tyne-side, inner Leeds or east London? The policy is intellectually incoherent. Green belts should be sacrosanct. Residential development should be concentrated on existing

urban and suburban sites, with the market left to equate supply and demand. The planning framework should set the terms for this market, not vice versa. A sensible framework, that of green belt, should not be torn up because one player, the private housebuilder, wants to get rich quick. Rural houses may be more expensive as a result. That is the price for preserving countryside. But a benefit is that urban housing will perform become more attractive.

Green-belt development is "planning stupid". It disperses commuter settlement. Residents must use cars for almost all journeys. Economic activity is drawn from town centres, requiring new roads, shops and schools. Radial routes become overloaded. Inner cities are depopulated and more subsidies must be spent reviving them. Every bone in the planning body should be seeking to achieve the opposite. It should be directing developers to rescue Britain's abused towns and suburbs.

I tell visitors mystified at the ugliness of Britain's urban sprawl to understand that this is a country run by foreigners. Scotland was until recently run by the English. So, too, are Wales and Northern Ireland. Provincial England is run by a distant race known as Londoners. They do not know England and rarely travel beyond the weekend cottage belt. Every continental politician is proud of having roots outside the capital. Most French or German officials holiday in their own country. Not in Britain. Most members of the present Cabinet, like the last, would howl blue murder at an overspill estate in Castellini in Chiari or the Upper Dordogne or Martha's Vineyard. But England is a land lost to the suburbs where only plegs go on holiday.

To be fair, this is not true of Mr Prescott. But I have no inkling of his vision of the land over which his departmental Panzer divisions are now roaming in bulldozers. In his own lifetime he has watched the town of Hull sprawl across Humber-side to embrace Hessle, Cottingham, Sutton and Hedon. Does he wait the same sprawl visited on every other town? Does he want to join Nicholas Ridley in the demology of landscape spoliation? Perhaps, as the poet said, they ain't making land any more; which is why we need planning. But they sure as hell ain't making countryside.

Simon Jenkins

Simon Jenkins is a well-known architectural critic and author. He is known for his sharp commentary on the state of British architecture and the environment.

Tennant extra

FROM Crossing the Brook to West End Girls. The Turner Prize has a new panel of judges and among them, I hear, is Neil Tennant, songsmith with the Pet Shop Boys. Sadly, this imaginative appointment is going down badly with serious sorts. Mr Tennant will join the Tate's director, Nicholas Serota, in adjudicating between the displays of postmodernist faces which regularly comprise the shortlist for the £20,000 award. Hitherto, his only recorded pronouncements on a work of art was: "This art is good, its pleasing to the eye."

His elevation means there is no place for the distinguished curator, Sir Roy Strong. The Establishment has given way. Most judges don't know the back of a picture from the front, but this is symptomatic of the triumph of popular culture. The Tate is dumbing down but it is sharp about knowing where the loot is. Perhaps Tennant has a big chequebook.

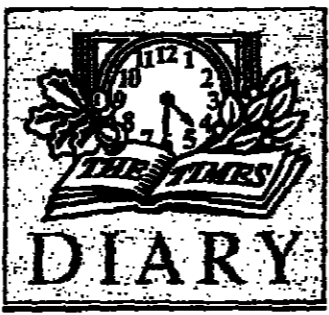
A little harsh. Tennant recently became a patron of New Act at the Tate and attends private views. "Sir Roy shouldn't get too panicky about it," the pop star tells me. "I was surprised to be asked, but I really am a junior partner. Marina Warner, who is an excellent art historian, is also on the panel so it will be a learning process for me." Not that Tennant doesn't know his Gilbert from his George. "I have collected modern art for a long time and I am excited about the current interest in British art."

Mixed palette: Turner, Tennant

● MICHAEL HESELTINE is "hard-asking". The former deputy PM has returned to his Haymarket Publishing empire but lacks an office. "I just hop between conference rooms," he tells me chirpily. And to think his old office was the size of a generous tennis court.

Working wives

THE love-in between the Blairs and the Clintons smooches along.



minably. This, commendably, did little to lower the famous grin.

Heaven sent

AT LAST, a defeated Tory who has found success. Lord Hunt, who as plain David was in the Cabinet for five years, is leading talks to merge three of Britain's largest legal practices, Beachcroft Stanleys, Wansbrough Willey Hargrave, and Vaudreys. Despite a busy political life introducing the poll tax, Hunt wisely kept a toe in the world of money: he remained a partner with Beachcroft Stanleys, leaving the Cabinet to become senior partner in 1995. "When my young god-daughter heard I had been made a lord, she asked if that meant I was going to heaven," says Hunt. "Her father responded that as a senior partner I had already arrived."

● PRESIDING over Champneys, a smartish health resort in Herts, may wield hidden explosives for the splendid Lord Thurso. Sailed to a life of carrot-juice and rowing machines, he has sailed down from 16 to 13 stone. Problem, his suits no longer fit. "They look incredibly baggy," says a bespoken colleague in the Lords. "He'll have to fork out for some big new ones."

JASPER GERARD



ORIENTAL Spice: the new delicacy. The Frankensteins who assembled these rivals to our Spice Girls are Hong Kong socialite David Tang and that old chasser, Malcolm McLaren, who managed the Sex Pistols. Jungki (junk) will be marketed as Asia's first "all female kung-fu fighting" band. The duo provided the catwalks of Shanghai, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur to find these talented, young musicians. "David contacted me and said 'What the hell has China got to sell?' America has Coca-Cola but they have no brand name," says McLaren. Rosa (Sizzling Spice) is Hong Kong's leading dancer. Ling (Bamboo Spice), is a Vogue cover girl. Ching and Celeste from Singapore (Sweet and Sour Spice) join the half-Chinese Sam (Cracker Spice, definitely). Tang will launch them with a huge thrash in New York on Chinese New Year — wok and roll.

Alan Coren



My alter ego is a card — but what does he take me for?

I have a doppelgänger. Sadly, though, I know very little about him, other than that wherever he is ganging as my doppel, he is ganging there in cheap shoes, and might also be carrying a door. Possibly a tool-kit, too. Perhaps on a bicycle. This may be somewhat tricky for him should he be drunk, especially if it is windy in Hull, because managing a bicycle while carrying a tool-kit in one hand and a door in the other is awkward enough at the best of times, but if you have just tied on a few large ones and there are gales about ... you will, I'm sure, get the picture.

Not, mind, the whole picture. For if you have mentally gummied the face atop this column onto the bald head of the cyclist, imagined him flashing that cheesy smirk as he wobbles through the storm-tossed byways of Humber-side, you must now ungum it, since my doppelgänger doesn't look like me, he is my doppelgänger only by virtue of the card in his pocket. Because when he goes into a shop to buy a door or a spanner, it is my name he signs on the slip that chatters from the till after the shopkeeper has swiped the card my doppelgänger has given him.

Good word, swiped. It allows me to segue seamlessly into the fraught explanation of all this, since in order for these assorted shopkeepers to swipe my card, it had first to be swiped by my doppelgänger. He did this (I am as sure as one can be in such matters) from the floor of a Lincoln gas station on Wednesday, that being the last time I used it, in a bit of the sort of hurry where things can get dropped; though I didn't twig this until Friday, when I opened my wallet and the card wasn't in its snug little slot. But it had, as I discovered after I rang the card company to nullify it, been inserted through a lot of other little slots.

In Hull, where the first thing it bought was a pair of trainers for £24.99. A puzzle, that you can pay £100 for a good pair of trainers, so why, if it wasn't you that was paying, would you buy the hope? Hope of judicial mitigation if you ever got nicked? No good ones in your size? If so, did he have very large feet or very small ones? I wanted to know. I wanted the picture that isn't atop this column. I wanted it even more after the card-company told me the second purchase it was a front door from the Hull B & Q. The dwarf/giant had padded round there in his new shoes, and bought a door. For £80. Odd. I've never been to Hull, but it is a serious town, it must have chic shops, it must sell Lesons, Rolexes. Armani tags. I do not wish to boast, but my credit limit would have taken care of these, so why, once committed to a course of action which hangs sheep as well as lambs, would a thief's first thought be to buy a door? A cheap door, moreover, because when I phoned B & Q, they said doors went from £56 to £249.

Then he bought a tool-kit, but he didn't buy it at B & Q, he bought it from Do-it-All. Was he trying to cover his tracks? Clearly, he wanted to hang this front door of his — ours — but he didn't want B & Q to know he didn't have the cash to do it. Why? Because they might remember him, if the Old Bill ever asked, a man of 4ft 6in or 6ft 4in, in new shoes, buying not only a door but a tool-kit, too? If that was his reasoning, I wonder what he did with these purchases when he popped in to buy a bottle of Scotch? Surely the proprietor of Victoria Wine would remember a man with a door? He might even have battered, as such chaps do, nice door you get there, nice tool-box, I wouldn't drink if I was hanging a door, mind, ha-ha-ha, tricky item, your Johnny hinge ...

And why just one bottle? We could afford a case. Why not a whole bicycle, either? Because that's where he went next, not to buy a whole bike, just one wheel. I suddenly felt sorry for the man who was, very briefly, me: the man who had been limping about in worse than the cheapest shoes, behind a bust front door, desperate for the drink he couldn't afford because he was saving up for a new wheel on a bike which was either too big for him, or too small. Do we get a fuller picture now? Is my doppelgänger not so total a loser that he has no idea what to do when he is, for once, a finder? I feel for him. I hope Hull's finest don't spot his new door, bound to have been hung upside down.

For there, but for the grace of God, gang, I

MEMBERS AND
TRANSPORT OF



MEMBERS AND MILLIONS

Democracy would save the Tories future embarrassment

The Conservative Party's association with the Ma family is inevitably a matter of much discomfort for William Hague. Although the Conservative leader had no association with what might have happened in 1994, he heads an organisation including many who were involved. Although the "Hong Kong connection" does not lead to his door and although contributions will be accepted and that future large donations will be made public, his position is still an unhappy one.

He has two types of remedy. In the short term, if senior party figures are shown to have known that the ultimate source of Mr Ma's vast financial support was highly suspect, then that information must be made available. Mr Hague should not shield ex-leaders or former party chairmen. If he does, then he can hardly expect credit for the changes that he has initiated.

In the longer term there is a different lesson that can be drawn from this affair. In the course of the last Parliament the Tories became dangerously dependent on a small number of large personal donations. Some of those individuals had limited connections with this country. A proportion of such people will have assumed that their contributions would be rewarded in some fashion. This was not a desirable position for a party to place itself in. It happened because of a long-term crisis affecting the Conservative Party as an organisation that became a calamity under John Major. The Tories turned to rich foreign donors because they were the sole source of revenue available.

The Conservatives must become a modern mass-membership party. That has been the central theme of the Hague reform initiative. There have been strong developments on a number of fronts. Conservative MPs have adopted a radically different system for the selection of their leader, first put forward by *The Times*, that will allow the entire party membership to choose between a short-list of candidates presented by the parliamentary party. Conservative aspirants for

the European Parliament will be chosen on a One Member One Vote system. The same principle will be applied in the contest for Mayor of London. By Conservative standards, this is little short of revolutionary.

The Tories and democracy are almost reconciled. There is one significant exception. The "green paper" released at the Conservative conference proposed a national board for the party. This has formed the basis for a "white paper" that will be finalised this week. This board remains—at best—a partially democratic institution. Half of its membership would be under the direct appointment or influence of the leader; the rest would be selected by a convention dominated by constituency chairmen. The central point of the Hague reforms was the creation of a single and accountable party structure. The current blueprint falls short of that ambition.

Mr Hague has the opportunity to make his influence felt and can be confident that party activists will support him. The leader should control a smaller proportion of the national board; otherwise it will not be considered an independent institution. A majority of board members must be responsible to a much wider section of the party. At least some slots should be selected by a ballot of the membership. The rest should emerge from a convention that includes MPs, councillors and constituency officials. The Tories could boast a leadership method and a national committee strikingly more democratic than that of the Labour Party.

This is the minimum requirement for the revival of the Conservative Party. It would promise proper participation at all levels for all positions of consequence. Mr Hague has the chance to remould the Tories as radically as Tony Blair has recently reshaped the Labour Party. He should seize democracy with both hands. Half-measures will not be sufficient. A party that is open, inclusive and attractive can seek an enormous increase in its membership. The Tories would not then need to look to the far east for their finances.

THE POPE'S HAVANA

A visit that Castro cannot control

When Pope John Paul II kisses the soil of Cuba today, many will greet him as the dawning of freedom after the dark night of a people's soul. For nearly 40 years Roman Catholics, who make up half of the island's population of 10 million, have devoutly wished for such a consummation. Nobody knows what will happen at the four open-air masses, culminating on Sunday, when a million people through Revolution Plaza in Havana to watch the Holy Father invoke the Almighty in the presence of the father of Latin American communism, Fidel Castro.

The President will meet the Pope at his palace for talks tomorrow, renewing an acquaintance which began at the Vatican in November 1996. That encounter was surprisingly cordial. Both are old men in a hurry. Each is one of the most recognizable faces alive. Both had an excellent Catholic education. Otherwise they have little in common. John Paul II, ailing and frail as he is, comes as a conquering hero. This is his first opportunity to address the last important Catholic nation to receive him in person. It concludes the long journey he began in 1983 with his triumphant return to Poland, which did so much to prepare the bloodless fall of communism in Eastern Europe. However firmly the Vatican denies that he intends to destabilise Castro, the Cuban people cannot but be reminded that their bankrupt regime is merely unfinished business of the Cold War.

Castro, by contrast, can only appeal to past glories and anti-Americanism; he has been promising blood, sweat and tears for too long now. Yet his tenacity must never be

underestimated. The fact that he has clung to power, despite losing his Soviet patron, cannot be attributed solely to the brutality with which he has crushed all organised opposition. By restoring limited religious tolerance, he clearly hopes to postpone the inevitable end of his era. Castro is gambling on an enthusiastic welcome for his guest, followed by an orderly itinerary with a pontifical blessing to restore his own waning popularity. Did not Stalin himself, betrayed by Hitler, turn to the persecuted Orthodox Church, in his hour of need?

John Paul II, however, comes not to praise Castro but to bury him. This is no mere visit: it is a visitation, the irruption of the free world into a time capsule which has been fed on fantasy since the early 1960s. It may well turn into the Cuban leader's worst nightmare. Already it is clear that the clock cannot be turned back: to abolish Christmas again, having just reintroduced it, would provoke popular fury. Even if the vast crowds are obedient, even if the Pope is guarded in his references to human rights, this visit will demonstrate once more that Christianity remains a profoundly subversive religion. Its doctrines, its values, its spirit are incompatible with a totalitarian system such as Castro's Cuba. And there is no doubt which system will last longest.

This pontificate has done more than any since the middle ages to spread Catholicism across the globe. Whether or not he lives to complete his task, Pope Wojtyla will leave an indelible mark on history. This week of all weeks, Fidel Castro must wish that his own legacy were as permanent.

TRANSPORT OF DELIGHT

For music and make-up mirrors, take the car not the bus

The findings will bring despair to urban planners, bus companies and anti-roads campaigners. A new survey has found that no matter how bad the congestion, how slow the journey or how wasteful of time and money, motorists will continue driving to work, even if they spend most of their journey stuck in a traffic jam. Only seven per cent of motorists would give up the comfort of their cars for the vagaries of public transport, even if congestion doubled their journey times, according to a 107-page report that has now landed on John Prescott's desk.

Clearly the love affair with the car is far from over, despite the fashionable abuse heaped by planners and do-gooders on this menace to Britain's cities, countryside and sanity. But can anyone be surprised? A car is, after all, far more than a means of transport: it is an Englishman's castle on wheels. It is the last place of privacy in our intrusive and eavesdropping society. It is the vehicle in which romance blossoms, music defers and all the pent-up emotions of the day can be unburied in comfort.

A car is one of society's few status symbols that has not lost its status. Class distinctions may be fading, but you can still make your mark on an outward testament of your standing. Even where merely purring in Purley, the feline energy of your three-litre engine reminds those around that you can spring from zero to 60 miles an hour in seconds should you ever have an open road ahead of you. You can trace all the

understated elegance of your lifestyle, the suppleness of your mind or the nonchalance of your breeding in an infinite gradation of lines, wings, alloys, tints and metallic blues. You can amuse your neighbours with some dangling dolls or three furry dice in the back window, or proclaim to the world at large that you have a baby on board. You can stick a discreet National Trust emblem in your window, show off your old Swiss motorway pass or speak your mind with a variety of witty political injunctions.

Many people now spend so much time in their cars that they furnish them like their homes. They keep their leather seats spotless, or strew the back seat with children's toys and bric-a-brac. They have a library of the entire Ring Cycle, the collected Abba hits or Pavarotti in the Park which, in quadrophonic reverberation, can soothe the frustrations of bottlenecks on the M6 interchange. A car can become an office, with phones and faxes. It can be a boudoir where hair can be coiffed and lipstick deftly applied. It can be a mobile café, a cramped-seaside changing room and a base camp for safari parks or mountaineering. Try doing any of that on the 64 bus.

As a means of transport, the car is less and less practical. But until undergrounds find a way of halting overcrowding buses of arriving on time and bicycles of keeping us warm in winter, the car remains our personal and irreplaceable cocoon, the popular refuge from today's life after bed.

Inadequate funds for mental health

From Dr Simon Smith

Sir, Frank Dobson's decision to abandon Care in the Community (report, January 17) will be met with mixed feelings by mental health professionals, users of services and their carers. There have been too many avoidable homicides and suicides since the implementation of this policy, but the majority of those with severe mental illness, including schizophrenia, pose no threat to anyone. Many have been successfully helped to independent existence in their community where in the past they would have languished in crumbling Victorian asylums.

The question Mr Dobson must ask himself is whether Care in the Community failed because it is an idea that is fundamentally flawed or whether it failed because it was implemented badly and underfunded. Royal College of Psychiatrists figures show that since 1991 the funding of mental health services has fallen from 15 per cent to 12 per cent of the overall NHS spend. Small wonder that many professionals believe that the rapid bed reduction and inadequate replacement with community facilities was undertaken by managers whose primary goal was saving money.

Currently, professionals are leaving the specialty in droves. There are several hundred vacancies nationwide for consultant psychiatrists and this year's intake of junior doctors is not enough to maintain current staffing levels.

The forthcoming review of mental health services and subsequent Bill must address the fact that any solution that satisfies users, carers and professionals can only be highly expensive. Good quality, modern psychiatric care requires adequate community provision as well as adequate in-patient facilities and sufficient appropriately trained professionals. Many parts of the country fail to reach acceptable standards in one or more of these three areas.

Mr Dobson's challenge remains to tackle all these issues within overall resource constraints.

Yours faithfully,
SIMON SMITH
(Consultant psychiatrist),
Kidderminster Healthcare
NHS Trust,
Bewdley Road, Kidderminster,
Worcestershire DY11 6RU.
si.smith@dia1.pipex.com
January 19.

Japanese apology

From Mr J. Bourlet

Sir, Writing on Japan's attitude to former POWs, Mr Kevan Hyett (letter, January 19) comments that "they regret only losing the war, nothing else, and an apology now is meaningless". "Only" in this context is not quite true. For many years the Japanese, whilst regretting losing the war, felt a much stronger emotion—of shame in losing the war. We should realise that in a different culture shame can be more significant than guilt.

If there has now been a change of heart by a new generation of Japanese (and having spent a total of four years in Japan I am inclined to suspect that this is indeed so for many individuals) and if therefore Japan could bring itself to express heartfelt regret and shame for the deeds of the Japanese Imperial Army, an apology could in fact be very significant.

Yours faithfully,
JIM BOURLET,
London Guildhall University,
Department of Business Studies,
84 Moorgate, EC2M 6SQ.
January 19.

Algerian massacres

From the Ambassador of Algeria

Sir, The serious accusations against my country's authorities contained in your report of January 15, headed "Torture victims accuse military rulers of fostering death squads", emanate from sympathisers of extremist movements.

Survivors of the massacres could have told you a different story about the gruesome barbarity of which these psychopathic fanatics are capable. To blame their intolerable abominations on the security forces can only be perceived as coming straight from the imagination of the mentally sick.

Yours faithfully,
A. BENYAMINA,
Embassy of Algeria,
53 Holland Park, W11 3RS.
January 19.

Falling standards?

From Mrs Jacky Commander

Sir, Mrs Susan George (letter, January 19) dislikes the expression "fall pregnant" and sees it as "working class". I fear she may have fallen victim to a Budleigh Salterton malady. My shorter OED lists a meaning for "fall" which perfectly fits the expression to which she objects: "To become (what the complement signifies)—His horse fell lame (Southern); to fall heir to an estate (1891)."

A working-class estate, presumably?
Yours faithfully,
J. COMMANDER,
East Clist, Farringdon,
Exeter, Devon EX5 2JD.
January 19.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

Opposition to the Tory Europhiles

From Dr Alan Sked

Sir, I was greatly amused by your report of January 19 (later editions) that the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust, set up in 1904 "to sort out imbalances in the democratic system" is to donate £200,000 to the Tory Europhiles. That group can now count on the combined resources of the Labour Movement, the Liberal Democrats, the European Union—one is tempted to add the BBC—and halt the Tory party.

Why didn't the Rowntree Trust give the money to the other side (eg, the Campaign for an Independent Britain or the Anti-Maastricht Alliance) to achieve its objective? Perhaps it requires an educational grant itself?

Yours sincerely,
ALAN SKED
(Leader, UK Independence Party, 1993-97),
Flat 3, Aberdeen Court,
68 Aberdeen Park, N5 2BH,
January 20.

From Lord Denmore

Sir, Sir Ray Whitney (letter, January 8) apparently believes that he and his Europhile contemporaries know what is best for the Conservative Party's future. It is hard to understand why. During the last five years of their administration support for the party in the country drained away and left the average age of activists at 62.

The claim that the January 5 letter from "the Howe group" to *The Independent* presented a "powerful intellectual case" is astonishing. It was singularly lacking in intellectual substance, being mere repetition of mantra about missing trains and being at the heart of Europe. There was no mention of the ERM experience, nor of the political and constitutional implications of surrendering our sovereignty.

Self assessment

From Mrs Rosemary Rabson

Sir, Like Professor Felgett (letter, January 14), I get my accountant to handle my tax affairs. My reasoning is that accountants and tax inspectors are in the same trade and talk the same language.

For the same reason, most people would instruct a plumber to install their new lavatory or a lawyer to defend them in court.

For the Revenue to insist on self assessment seems to me equivalent to a court demanding that all defendants should be litigants in person, then penalising them for lack of legal expertise.

Yours faithfully,
ROSEMARY RABSON,
The Home Farmhouse,
Eyke, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 2QG.
January 14.

The finest hour

From Ms Avril Fox

Sir, As a member of the generation active during the last war, I'm becoming irritated by the 50-year syndrome expressed by would-be historical revisionists. No, Michael Gove ("Winston's lesson for William", January 6), we were not bellicose, and neither, David Cox (letter, January 12), did we need Churchill to "galvanise us into action". Nor did we all live in "urban slums".

The majority of our generation, urban and rural, well-off and poor, liked Churchill because in his leadership speeches he clarified and ennobled our muddled but dogged and reluctant feelings. At the same time we grumbled, used the black market and even in some cases turned spy. Simultaneously we laughed at ourselves: *Dad's Army* offers a fair picture.

But once we had passed the "phony war" stage and accepted reality in all its unpleasantness, few of us looked for a way out through agreement with Hitler: any voicing of such ideas in the factory, pub or at the pool table would have got short shrift. I never heard such a voice.

Yours truly,
AVRIL FOX (aged 80),
The Old House,
26 Pound Lane,
Aylsham, Norfolk NR11 6DR.
January 13.

From Mr David Foster

Sir, After the fall of France in 1940 many pinned up printed notices in their houses to the effect that

Plastic padding

From Mr John Gildersleeve

Sir, With reference to Dr John Burscough's inquiry (letter, January 9; see also letter January 20), I think that someone with nine "loyalty" shopping cards is known technically as a promiscuous shopper.

Yours faithfully,
JOHN GILDERSLEEVE,
Caldrean Manor,
Ickleton,
Salford Walden, Essex CB10 1SS.
January 12.

Letters that are intended for publication should carry a daytime telephone number. They may be sent to a fax number—0171-782 5046. e-mail to: letters@the-times.co.uk

Costly mechanics of council voting

From Councillor Paul Caswell

Sir, I was delighted to read (report, January 19) that the mechanics of the voting system are to be reviewed.

This year, in a town with 1,850 electors, our income from council tax was £8,000. We spent £1,500 on a council by-election—as required by law—in which fewer than 300 people voted.

There must be more cost-effective methods of doing things.

Yours faithfully,
PAUL CASWELL
(Deputy Mayor,
Fowey Town Council),
57 Hanson Drive,
Fowey, Cornwall PL23 1ET.
January 19.

Drink-driving law

From His Honour Judge John Morgan

Sir, Mr Michael Gould (letter, January 14) is quite correct to point out that stopping drivers at random is lawful under section 163 of the Road Traffic Act 1988, but that a breath test can only follow after an accident or a moving traffic offence or where the constable has reasonable cause to suspect that the motorist has alcohol in his body. However, that latter suspicion can arise after random stopping when, for example the window is wound down and the constable smells alcohol on the driver's breath.

Even where the constable is found to have no reasonable cause for such suspicion yet administers a breath test, the Divisional Court of the Queen's Bench Division held in *DPP v Godwin* in 1991 that although a subsequent arrest would be unlawful, evidence of the breath-test procedures at the police station following the arrest could properly be used in court subject only to a discretion in the court as to its fairness.

We have therefore had *de facto* random breath testing for some years.

Yours faithfully,
JOHN MORGAN,
The Queen Elizabeth II Law Courts,
Derby Square, Liverpool L2 1XA.
January 15.

Tippet obituary

From Mr Stephen Green

Sir, Mr Meirion Bowen (letter, January 13) makes a good point. It is quite absurd to claim that he "survives" Sir Michael Tippet. But this is hardly an isolated incident. I am sure many of your readers will have noticed the growing tendency in your obituary columns for the deceased to be survived by persons unrelated to them by blood or marriage.

The rule surely is that the dead are survived by husband or wife and by sons and daughters, not by partners, business or otherwise. For example, should, by some mischance, the current Foreign Secretary die, he will be survived by his wife and sons, not by his mistress, his secretary (if different), his bookmaker or his Cabinet colleagues.

Yours faithfully,
STEPHEN GREEN
(National Director,
Christian Voice),
PO Box 526, Sutton SM2 5PH.

From Mr Terry Philpot

Sir, Sir Michael Tippet would no doubt, as Meirion Bowen says, have "hoisted in derision" at your obituarist's camouflaging of his homosexuality by stating that he "never married".

In which case, how might he have reacted to the fact that Mr Bowen's own obituary of Sir Michael, of nearly a page in *The Guardian* (January 10) made no mention of Sir Michael being his "nearest and dearest for nearly three decades"?

Yours faithfully,
TERRY PHILOT,
1a Silchester Road,
Oxted, Surrey RH8 ONP.
terry.philpot@bt.com
January 14.

God and the Internet

From Mr Alan M. Linfield

Sir, If the Internet should indeed be used as a model for understanding the mind of God (report, January 20) I would be rather worried, judging by the response times I usually experience and frequently what I am eventually given, about the implications this would have for a doctrine of prayer.

Yours faithfully,
ALAN M. LINFIELD,
23 Highfield Road, Tring,
Hertfordshire H12 4DX.
enz252@mailbox.ucc.ac.uk
January 20.

Upwardly mobile

From Mr Alan Millard

Sir, Mobile phone companies' aerial masts on church spires (article, Week-end, January 17)? What next? Stands the Church clock at ten to three? And is that mast AT&T?

Yours faithfully,
ALAN MILLARD,
8 Medina Court,
Marine Parade West,
Leas-on-the-Solent PO13 9NH.
January 17.

From Dr Steven Cruickshank

Sir, I am a consultant anaesthetist and have been looking forward to encountering Inland Revenue employees as patients.

When I do, I shall offer them "self-assessment for anaesthesia", which will include their requirements for anaesthetic agents, dosage, technique, replacement of blood loss, etc. This will be quite straightforward, since any fool can give an anaesthetic and the form is easy to understand.

Most will be able to produce a satisfactory assessment, although any mistakes will of course be upon their own heads.

Yours faithfully,
S. CRUICKSHANK,
3 North Road,
Barnfield,
Newcastle upon Tyne NE20 9UH.
scruickshank@aol.com
January 14.

there was "no talk of surrender in this house". A boy at the time, it brought home to me that there must be other houses where there was such talk.

What united the country was not only Churchill's "mobilising the English language", in the words of President Kennedy's tribute, but the formation of the Local Defence Volunteers, and even more so when they were renamed the Home Guard. People suddenly thought, "I'm fighting to save my home."

My wife's father was General Commanding the Home Guard, so only she and her two sisters have any real right to call it Dad's Army.

Yours faithfully,
DAVID FOSTER,
101 Corve Street,
Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1EB.
dkdfoster@btinternet.com
January 12.

From Mr J. W. King

Sir, In June 1940 I was a Territorial, newly evacuated from Dunkirk and feeling despondent at the defeat which the Allies were suffering in France. My wife, serving in the WAAF, was equally despondent: we had joined up as the only way to help stop Hitler's aggression.

Then came Churchill's speech. We felt that at last we had a real leader. The people did not need to be galvanised: they were ready and willing.

Yours faithfully,
J. W. KING,
Littlecroft, 56 Bank Crescent,
Ledbury, Herefordshire HR8 1AE.
January 12.

Millennium bug

From Lord Herschell

Sir, According to a report in your Business section today, the millennium bug will affect not only computers but also plant and machinery. It seems that little is being done to avoid the whole country grinding to a halt on January 1, 2000.

Of course, we shall have the Millennium Dome to admire, but would it not be more sensible to spend the £750 million (letter, January 20) on ensuring that the country can be kept as a going concern after 1999?

I remain, Sir, yours faithfully,
HERSCHELL,
Westfield House,
Ardington,
Wantage, Oxfordshire OX12 8PN.
January 19.

هكذا من لايصل

COURT CIRCULAR

SANDRINGHAM, NORFOLK January 20: The Hon Mary Morrison has succeeded Mrs Christian Adams as Lady in Waiting to the Queen.

Today's royal engagements

The Prince of Wales will visit St Edmundsbury Cathedral, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, where he will view an exhibition of designs for the Millennium tower, at 2.00.

Service dinner

HMS Victory Admiral Sir John Bridgstocke, Second Sea Lord and Commander-in-Chief Naval Home Command, and Lady Bridgstocke were the hosts at a dinner held last night in HMS Victory.

Reception

The Chambers of Harvey McGregor, QC The Chambers of 4 Paper Buildings, Temple, and Sweet & Maxwell held a reception at the Terrace Pavilion in the House of Commons yesterday.

Merchiston Castle School

The Governors of Merchiston Castle School have appointed Mr Andrew Hunter, Housemaster of Army House, Bradford College, to succeed Mr D.M. Spawforth as Headmaster on his retirement in August 1998.

Luncheons

British EMUNAH held a Luncheon at the Park Lane Hotel, WI to mark Israel's 50th Anniversary. Sir Bernard Ingham was the principal speaker; the incoming Israeli Ambassador, Mr Dror Zeigerman, Lord Jauncey of Braunstone, Mrs Rochelle Selby and Mrs Della Worms also spoke.

certain species of plants and animals in decline. Mr Keith McDowall presided. Among other present were: Sir Sydney Chapman, MP, Mr Alan Williams (The Post Office), Dr Roger Harris (the Countywide), Mr Peter Davies (RSPCA), Mr Peter Dwyer (Dogs), Dr Robert Mitchell (English Nature), Mr Michael (English Nature), Mr David Chubb, MP.



Helleborus thibetanus, a rare hellebore from China that is being shown by several exhibitors at the show

Spring makes an early showing

By ALAN TOGGOOD HORTICULTURE CORRESPONDENT

SNOWDROPS flowering three weeks earlier than normal, and early late camellias flowering together, reflect the unseasonal weather and make the Royal Horticultural Society's first show of the year seem like an early spring show.

What until now was thought to be a very rare hellebore is being shown by several exhibitors at this show, which opened in Westminster yesterday.

The RHS ornamental plants' competition is well supported. Mrs J. Wright of Cowden, Kent, has won the class for three ornamental trees or shrubs in flower with Mahonia japonica, Hamamelis mollis 'Palida' and Garrya fraxinifolia.

Birthdays today

Mr M.J. Bolent, director-general, Association of British Insurers, 49, St. Dunstons, London, E.C.4.

Church news

The Very Rev Patrick Mitchell, Dean of Windsor, is to retire on August 31.

Dinners

Company of Tobacco Pipe Makers and Tobacco Blenders Mr Richard Vanderpump, Master of the Company of Tobacco Pipe Makers and Tobacco Blenders, presided at a dinner held at Merchant Taylor's Hall last night.

Forthcoming marriages

Mr D.R. Arbutnot and Miss A. Kaban The engagement is announced between Dominic, eldest son of Mr and Mrs Hugh Arbutnot, of Fulham, London, and Andrea, daughter of Mr and Mrs Ferenc Kalman, of Szekesfehervar, Hungary.

Marriage

Captain E.T. Bosman and Miss J.C. Sutherland The marriage took place on Saturday, January 17, 1998, at the Church of St Mary, Eversley, of Captain Edward Thomas Bosman, Irish Guards, son of the late Mr Arthur Bosman, and of Mrs Ann Bosman, in Miss Joanna Clark Sutherland, daughter of Mr and Mrs Ian Sutherland, of The Old Rectory, Eversley, Hampshire.

Anniversaries

BIRTHS: Thomas (Stonewall) Jackson, Confederate general in the American Civil War, Clarkburg, Virginia, 1824; P. Morton Shand, architectural critic and translator of Gropius's The New Architecture and the Bauhaus, Kensington, 1882; Christian Dior, fashion designer, Granville, Normandy, 1905.

University news

Oxford Mr David R. Holmes, Registrar and Secretary of Birmingham University, has been appointed Registrar of Oxford University from July 1 in succession to Dr A.J. Dorcy.

Appointments

Mr J.C.M. Taylor has been appointed Director of the Carpenter's Company Building Crafts College from April 20.

Latest wills

Henry Ernest Chase, journalist, of London SW6, left estate valued at £59,535 net.

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PERSONAL COLUMN

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DEATHS: Mrs M. J. Bolent, director-general, Association of British Insurers, 49, St. Dunstons, London, E.C.4, died on January 20, 1998, aged 76.

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Advertisement for PERSONAL COLUMN services, including tickets, travel, and property services.

NEWS IN BRIEF
Cabbie is victim of loyalist revenge

10 suspensions

HMSO critic

Rights explain

Boy, 12, a faith

Train kills dog

Clayboys com

Timothy gene

OBITUARIES

CARL PERKINS

Carl Perkins, rock 'n' roller, died on January 19, aged 65. He was born on April 9, 1932.

Carl Perkins was one of the great rock 'n' roll pioneers, and for a short time in the 1950s it seemed that he was going to be even bigger than Elvis Presley. The two shared a label at Sun Records in Memphis before Presley's contract was sold to RCA. When American sales of Perkins' Blue Suede Shoes initially outstripped Heartbreak Hotel, Presley's first single for his new company, a worried RCA executive rang Sun to ask: "Did we sign the wrong one?" In the end, of course, Perkins was beaten to the number one slot by Presley, and he was never to write a more potent song than Blue Suede Shoes. His career was blighted by injury and alcohol, yet his "rockabilly" hybrid of white country music and black rhythm 'n' blues helped to create a sound that changed the face of popular music.

Perkins' early life reads like a story out of a backwoods American novel. The son of poor sharecroppers, he grew up near Tiptonville, Tennessee, where he and his brothers were the only white kids on the farm. He started picking cotton at an early age after his father contracted tuberculosis, and he once commented: "You either worked the dirt or you owned it—and we worked it."

He and his young brothers Jay and Clayton listened to country music on the radio show Grand Ole Opry, and his first guitar was made out of a broomstick and cigar box with just two strings. Graduating to a cheap second-hand model, he learnt to play from a local black sharecropper who taught him to bend the notes like the great bluesmen. When the family moved

to Jackson, Tennessee, he formed the Perkins Brothers Band with Jay and Clayton, and Fike Holland on drums. They played country music at local dances and had a show on the local radio station WTJS, although Perkins, who had married Valda Crider in 1953, kept his day job.

By now he was listening to urban bluesmen such as John Lee Hooker and Muddy Waters, and soon he had developed a unique sound which he described as "blues with a country beat and my own lyrics". When he first heard Presley attempting a similar fusion on Blue Moon of Kentucky, he knew they were on the brink of something big. "Elvis sounded identical to what our band was doing, and I just knew we could make it in the record business after that," he said.

After being rejected by various country labels, Perkins went to Memphis and auditioned for Sun Records, which already had Presley and was pioneering the new sound. Four early singles flopped, but then came Blue Suede Shoes, a song full of defiant pride and teenage individualism. It had a threatening edge, but was also full of country imagery about drinking liquor "out of an old fruit jar".

He wrote the song in the middle of the night after hearing the title phrase on the dance floor. He later recalled: "You gotta be real poor to care about new shoes like that. I went downstairs and wrote out the words on a potato sack. We didn't have any reason to have writing paper around."

Perkins also recorded the song but didn't release it as a single at first because it was a single at first because he wanted his friend to succeed. Perkins' recording became a million-seller in America, although in Britain the two versions competed, with Presley rising to number nine with



Perkins just one place behind. The song was subsequently covered by everyone from Jimi Hendrix to John Lennon.

The new world of rock 'n' roll was at his feet, but disaster struck in March 1956. As he was driving to New York to appear on The Perry Como Show, Perkins's car hit a truck. He was in hospital with spinal injuries for six months, the momentum of his career stalled, and he lost his chance of rivaling Presley. He later recalled philosophically: "I was just a poor farm boy, but with Blue Suede Shoes I felt I had a chance... But Elvis had the looks on me. The girls were

going for him for more reasons than music. There was no way of keeping him from being the man and I've never felt bitter."

Other good songs followed, among them Put Your Cat Clothes On, Dime Fried and Matchbox, and at Christmas 1956 Perkins took part in a jam session with Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis and Johnny Cash. A tape machine was accidentally left running, as usual, and the impromptu session turned up years later on CD as The Million Dollar Quartet.

Perkins moved to Columbia Records in 1958, but the company pushed him into unsatis-

fying attempts to reshuffle the foot fetish formula, with absurd copycat titles such as Pink Pedal Pushers and Pointed Toe Shoes. He then switched to Decca without success, but was given a new currency when the Beatles declared they were ardent fans and recorded three of his songs. This led to a British tour in 1964 with Chuck Berry.

Shortly afterwards he joined Johnny Cash's band, apparently in a pact to help overcome Perkins' alcoholism and Cash's drug addiction. They played together for ten years, during which a time Perkins co-wrote A Boy Named

Sue, although he was not credited.

Despite his return to country music and having become a born-again Christian, he also exploited every opportunity to revive former glories, and milked the Presley connection. There was an album with the progressive rock band NRBQ featuring remakes of his early hits and a tribute single after Presley's death in 1977. He took to the road again in the mid-1970s in a band with his sons Stan and Greg, and started his own record label, sentimentally entitled Suede. Surprisingly, more than 20 years after his solitary British chart single, he scored his first British album chart success with Ol' Blue Suede is Back, featuring yet more remakes.

In the early 1980s he set up the Carl Perkins Centre for the Prevention of Child Abuse, appeared as a nightclub bouncer in John Landis's film Into the Night, and wrote two autobiographical books. He appeared on Paul McCartney's Tug of War album, and played guitar on the McCartney duet with Stevie Wonder, Ebony and Ivory. He also recorded with Lewis, Cash and Roy Orbison as The Class of '55, and made a TV special in which he appeared with Eric Clapton, George Harrison and Ringo Starr. In 1987 he was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, then still in his infancy.

Despite developing throat cancer in 1991 he continued working, writing songs with Dolly Parton and touring Britain once more. His most recent album was Go Cat Go!, with Paul Simon and the former Beatles Harrison and McCartney.

He suffered three strokes at the end of last year which left him partially paralysed. He is survived by his wife, Valda, and their three sons and a daughter.

SIR ANDREW ARMSTRONG, Bt

Sir Andrew Armstrong, 6th Bt, CMG, colonial servant, died on December 21 aged 90. He was born on May 1, 1907.

WHEN Andrew Armstrong was interviewed for his first post in the Western Pacific, he was warned that one of his precursors had been killed and probably eaten by the natives. Was that likely to deter him?

"Oh no, sir," he insisted, fresh from driving a London bus in the General Strike. He had read a feature about the South Seas in the Boys Own Paper when he was 11 and it had captured his imagination ever afterwards. He was soon on his way to the Gilbert Islands to serve under Sir Arthur Grimble.

Tragedy of a different kind was, however, to befall Armstrong within a year of his arrival on Ocean Island in 1930. His bride, Phyllis, a colonel's daughter, was lighting a stove to cook their supper when it exploded. Many miles from a modern hospital, she died that night. Armstrong was himself badly burnt while trying to extinguish the flames, and he bore the scars on his hands for many years.

He became a district officer on the island of Beru, and married for the second time in 1932 after meeting the New Zealand-born Laurel Stuart while on leave at Suva in Fiji, where she worked as a secretary in Government House. Boats from Australia rarely visited the islands and they lived for much of the time on tinned meat and beetroot, supplemented by fish caught by his personal fisherman. Armstrong also had to learn to sail an outrigger canoe, the only regular means of travelling between the islands.

In 1940, after more than 12 years in the Pacific, he successfully applied for a post in Nigeria, with its better career prospects, after first taking some home leave. He almost lost his life on his way there. He was sailing from Britain in a fast unescorted convoy of four passenger liners in 1941, when his ship was bombed and sunk off Sierra Leone. Armstrong was rescued by the Royal Navy and landed at Lagos, with only a shirt and shorts (given him by a member of the crew).

He went on to serve in northern Nigeria as a district officer in Biha, Zaria and Ajaba, before moving as a senior district officer to the secretariat in Kaduna. He had become an authority on mining while working in the districts, how-

ever, and was transferred to Lagos as Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Mines and Power. He retired in 1961, at only 54, when Nigeria became independent.

Andrew Clarence Francis Armstrong had been born in Dublin where his father was Keeper of Irish Antiquities at the National Museum. He was nearly involved in a nasty accident at a tender age when on his way to sing in a concert in the city, dressed up as a soldier, at the start of the Easter Rising. A friend travelling on the same train realised that he might be in some danger on such a day and, hiring a cab, spirited him away to an aunt's house, where he hid for several days.

At 16 he had to face the death of his father, who was Bluemantle Pursuivant in the College of Heralds. By then he had already started at St Edmund's College, Ware, a Roman Catholic public school which he detested, though from there he won a place at Christ's College, Cambridge, to read economics.

On returning from Nigeria more than 30 years later, he found it hard to settle to a second career. He tried managing a building society, accountancy and teaching, without deriving much satisfaction from any of them. He had then to endure a further tragedy, in 1969, when his elder son died during a heart by-pass operation, a technique then still in its infancy. Greatly distressed, Armstrong retired finally in order to support his wife.

He was a serious croquet player who became secretary of the Phyllis Court Club at Henley-on-Thames and regularly took part in the national croquet championships at Eastbourne.

He had a gentle rather than a forceful personality, with perfect manners and great integrity, and could reflect with satisfaction upon a life in which he never tried to do anyone down. He often remarked wistfully that comradeship in Nigeria was never the same after the development of Paludrine, which kept malaria at bay. Until then they all behaved towards each other with great kindness because none knew when he might be struck down—and be in desperate need of a helping hand.

In 1987 he succeeded a cousin as the 6th baronet of Galloway, a title bestowed in 1841. His wife Laurel died in 1988, and Andrew Armstrong is survived by his younger son, a retired lieutenant-colonel, who now becomes the 7th baronet.



Andrew Armstrong shortly after his arrival in the Gilbert Islands, Western Pacific, in 1930

IVAN CHAMBERS

Ivan Chambers, OBE, bookseller, died on January 1 aged 95. He was born on January 20, 1902.

THE role of the literary bookseller, as exemplified by Ivan Chambers, was intellectually tough, hardworking and poorly paid. Such a figure always prided himself on giving his customers the highest standard of service, even when this was incompatible with profitability. The bottom line was a term unknown: not infrequently the owners of such businesses became bankrupt.

That is what happened to Ivan Chambers. In 1933 he was rescued from the receiver by his friends subscribing to preference shares and by the publisher Stanley Unwin, his landlord, buying up all the ordinary shares in 1935 for £500.

Chambers had joined William Jackson Bryce, the bookseller in Holborn, in 1925 when he was just 23. He stayed with this one firm all his working life, retiring as managing director of the business in 1970. By that time it was owned by W. H. Smith through its Bowes & Bowes subsidiary but, while Chambers was still in charge, the bookshop, by then in Museum Street, W.C1, remained a temple of personal bookselling, attracting custom from those who worked at, or visited, the British Museum.

The shop was on a corner site, only 1,100 square feet, but had an international reputation. During the Second World War, Winston Churchill was a customer. He asked Chambers to send first editions of all his works to Franklin D. Roosevelt.

At the height of its fame Bryce's employed 12 people yet turned over only £2 million a

year. It was never in the same league as Hatchards, Bumpus and Harrods, but Chambers was such a potent figure that, on his retirement, the Society of Bookmen, a private dining club of the book trade, gave him a lunch at the Criterion restaurant, attended by 140 admirers.

On that occasion Chambers was feted by bookselling and publishing colleagues and by the novelist Angus Wilson who, working as a Keeper at the British Museum, had been a regular customer. In proposing his health, Wilson commented: "Many booksellers do not know about books. But Ivan Chambers knew not only what I had published, but also what I was about to publish, and would say, with his habitual truthfulness, what he thought would happen to it."

Ivan Philip Marten Chambers was born of British parents in Bulgaria. He contracted polio at the age of five and permanently lost the use of his right arm. This, and the imperiousness of his father, curtailed his education, so that after mid-1916, "I was an autodidact". He worked first for a builder in Hampstead, then for an importer in the City. Later he not only educated himself to the level demanded by W. J. Bryce but rode a bicycle, without hand signals, the length and breadth of Europe.

He became a witty, deadpan after-dinner speaker, much in demand at trade gatherings. He also broadcast about books on the BBC's World Service. He was appointed OBE in 1971, the year after his retirement, which he spent in the West Country.

He married in 1943 Kathleen Pilbury, an artist. She survives him, together with their daughter.

DR. FUCHS LEAVING AGAIN IN TWO DAYS

From Our Special Correspondent

SOUTH POLE, Jan 20 THE long awaited meeting between Dr. Fuchs and Sir Edmund Hillary took place a mile from the buildings of the South Pole station at 12.45 this afternoon. A brilliant sunshine brought out every colour in the astonishing range of flags fluttering from each vehicle and sledge that had been brought across the Antarctic continent to the Pole by the British traverse party. Sir Edmund Hillary and Dr. Fuchs greeted each other cheerily and shook hands in front of a line of ducking and diving photographers...

Sir Edmund Hillary greeted Dr. Fuchs with "Hello, Bunny," and was answered with "Damn glad to see you, Ed." For ten minutes there was rapid, broken conversation between the leader and the many others who crowded through to congratulate Dr. Fuchs and wish him well. The five British vehicles and the American Weasels continued to camp as they stood parked on the snow, an eight-knot breeze whipping the exhaust fumes over the chattering groups of men. It was a tremendously gay and light-hearted occasion, more in the mood of an Austrian ski field than the

ON THIS DAY

January 21, 1958

Dr Fuchs's team reached the South Pole from Shackleton Base 11 days after the arrival there by Sir Edmund Hillary who had set off from Scott Base on McMurdo Sound. Dr Fuchs completed the first crossing of Antarctica arriving at Scott Base on March 2.

ominous "terrible place" that filled Robert Falcon Scott's thoughts 46 years ago... In spite of the rigour of their tremendous journey, all in the British party looked tough and iron-hard, as though they were only taking their second breath. Their faces were, of course, wreathed in ice-encrusted beards. After less than 15 minutes all the men began to climb back into their vehicles for the short run to the Pole station, and once more the battery of cine cameras recorded the passage of the trans-Antarctic expedition's tractors and their towed gear... The only question that the men in the party

PERSONAL COLUMN

FLIGHTS DIRECTORY

AIRLINK

Jetworld

Flight Seekers

FLIGHTWISE

JETLINE

FLIGHT SEARCHERS

DELTA WORLDWIDE

THRUWAYS

THRUWAYS

THRUWAYS

THRUWAYS

THRUWAYS

ANNOUNCEMENTS

LEGAL NOTICES

TRUSTEE ACTS

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NEWS

Robinson was 'badly advised'

Geoffrey Robinson, the Paymaster General, was criticised by the Parliamentary Ombudsman for failing to register an offshore trust in the Register of Members' Interests.

Both Sir Gordon Downey, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, and the MPs' Standards and Privileges Committee cleared the millionaire Treasury Minister of breaking any Commons rules.

Hit squads for failing hospitals

Hit squads are to be sent into failing hospitals where patient care is thought to be dangerously poor.

Princess trustees

The law firm Mishcon de Rook could lose its exclusive legal work for the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund after the trustees decided to put all its professional needs out to tender.

Islands anger

The Channel Islands and the Isle of Man attacked the Government after Ministers said they must curb financial crime and money laundering.

E-coli poison fine

The butcher's shop at the centre of the world's worst E-coli O157 food poisoning outbreak, in which 20 people died, was fined a total of £2,250 for breaches of food hygiene and safety laws.

Drug murders

Three drug dealers were murdered as they sat in a Range Rover in a remote lane in Essex before they could kill the man who had double-crossed them.

Downing Street cow

An elderly brown cow and its calf forced their way past Downing Street security guards, urged on by angry farmers protesting about falling incomes.

Wren accuses officer

A former Wren blamed sexual harassment from an officer for ending her Navy career. She said he made an improper suggestion in his cabin.

Geoffrey Boycott fined for assault

Geoffrey Boycott was given a suspended sentence and fined £5,000 in France for beating his former mistress, Margaret Moore, who was awarded the franc she had sought in damages after her lawyers said that the former cricketer had subjected her to a "brutal and caddish" assault during a row about money.



Oprah Winfrey, accused of falsely alleging that American beef could cause "mad cow" disease, at court in Amarillo, Texas yesterday

PHARMA

Pharma merger: SmithKline Beecham, the £41 billion Anglo-American pharmaceuticals company, is in talks with American Home Products which could lead to the biggest merger involving a British company.

Compensation bill: Reed Elsevier, is to offer advertisers around £200 million in compensation for "irregularities" in circulation claims made by publications in its Reed Travel Group subsidiary.

Markets: The FTSE 100 index rose 4.6 to 5,278.2. The pound fell to 105.2, falling 30c to \$1.6283 and 7.9pt to DM2.972.

FOOTBALL

Football: Aston Villa have put Savo Milosevic on the transfer-list after he made a spitting gesture towards supporters during the 5-0 defeat at Blackburn.

Tennis: Tim Henman lost to Jerome Golmard, a qualifier ranked No 101 in the world, in the first round of the Australian Open.

Rugby union: Michael Lynagh, the world-record international pointscorer, is to retire after 16 years of first-class rugby in Australia, Italy and England.

Cricket: The ECB told the Government that the game's finances would be dangerously undermined unless it was free to sell Test match television rights.

SURFING

Surfing: How Jane Clarke, the new chief executive of the British Academy of Film and Television Arts, is shaking off its clubby image.

Unhappy marriage: The Royal Opera's Marriage of Figaro forces Rodney Millings to disagree with the adage that you're never too old for a new experience.

Scottish house: As Edinburgh ponders the matter of its new parliament building, how have other countries overcome the political and aesthetic problems?

Happy birthday: Nicholas Snowman, the director of the South Bank, recalls how 30 years ago he co-founded the London Sinfonietta with some of his fellow Cambridge musicians.

FRIENDS OR FOES

Friends or foes: In the third extract from Baby Wars, Dr Robin Baker and Elizabeth Oram explain why siblings should balance conflict with co-operation.

Game generation: Once the American youngsters collectively labelled Generation X were seen as losers. No longer: now they are said to be the new capitalists.

Nigella Lawson: The millennium angst of couples who worry about being smug when they look at singles, who worryingly consider themselves fortunate.

Taste of honey: When Sylvia Flath and Ted Hughes began keeping bees, it was more than a country pursuit: The latest extracts from Birthday Letters.



TOMORROW

IN THE TIMES

FILMS

Geoff Brown reviews Titanic, a film already sailing to success

BOOKS

Peter Ackroyd looks back to look forward; Sadie Plant on computers; Richard Compton-Miller finds out who's who

Taking problem

The Government has asked for views on Britain's future housing needs. But is the VAT on property refurbishment a hindrance?

Stormy waters: Plans to convert the Plymouth dockyard are being criticised by a leading conservation organisation.

To avoid a repeat of last year, the Clinton administration will have to ditch the demure, hands-off approach. This week's Middle East meetings offer the perfect opportunity for tough talk and tough choices.

Preview: The cameras return to the Thames Valley Police. The Force (BBC2, 9.50pm). Review: Matthew Bond gets lost in the McCallum fog. Pages 42, 43

Members and millions

A party that is open, inclusive and attractive can seek an enormous increase in its membership. The Tories would not then need to look to the far east for their finances. Page 19

The Pope's Havana

When Pope John Paul II kisses the soil of Cuba today, many will greet him as the dawn of freedom after the dark night of a people's soul. Page 19

A transport of delight

A new survey has found that no matter how bad the congestion, how slow the journey or how wasteful of time and money, motorists will drive to work. Page 19

SIMON JENKINS

Mr Prescott has forged that most crushing of planning tools, a precedent... Britain's green belts are more than violated. They face gang rape. Page 18

MICHAEL GOVE

Labour wish to so discredit the funding of political parties by private individuals as to create an unstoppable momentum for capping private donations and introducing State funding. Page 18

PETER RIDDELL

We need an independent Electoral Commission at arms length from Government to supervise parties and electoral procedures. Without such a commission, we risk having an even messier position than now. Page 8

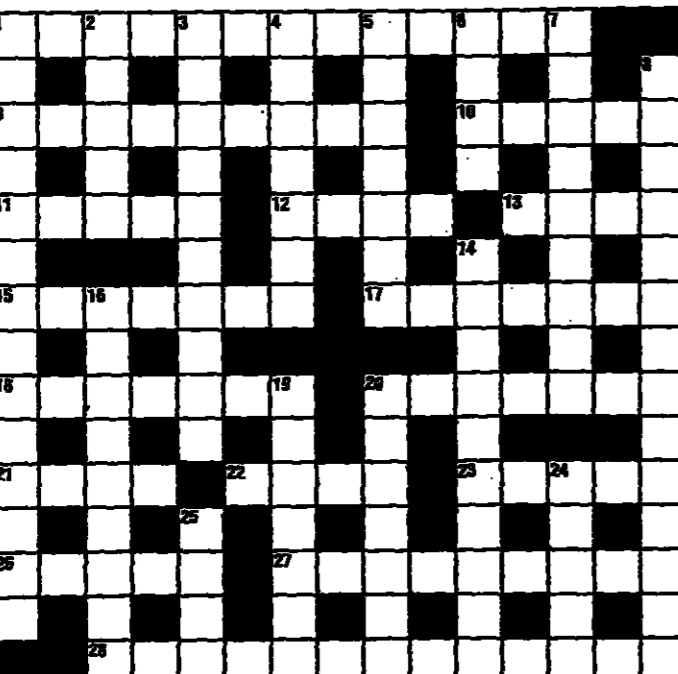
SIMON BARNES

Only a child or a football manager expects sport to be fair. But if sport does not strain every sinew to be fair, it is nothing. Page 40

Carl Perkins, rock 'n' roll pioneer; Sir Andrew Armstrong, BT, former colonial civil servant; Nean Chambers, bookseller. Page 21

Mental health funds; Tory euro-philes; Tuppert: Japanese apology; self-assessment; drink-driving; God and Internet; Algeria. Page 19

THE TIMES CROSSWORD NO 20,694



ACROSS
1 Advertising space provided by Kent town council (8,5).
9 Civil riot turned extremely nasty (9).
10 Create order out of original ignorance (5).
11 Girl in family's delicate, without energy (5).
12 Maiden given drink of less deadly type (4).
13 Sort of bird that can be plucked (4).
15 Red effect of wound suffered (7).
17 Sail's south to try to enlist support (7).
18 One who takes money for a horse (7).
20 Arguing with police moving East across motorway (7).
21 A brutal type is so backward (4).
22 One American girl endlessly adored one (4).
23 Put a stop to cold comfort (5).
26 One ordered to hold back pound coin (5).
27 As stated, meet consumers? That's an order (9).
28 Remarks including dreadful tip like this? Hardly! (13).

Solution to Puzzle No 20,693

COMBINE MANTAGE
O I N G E A D O N
U P S E T A D D I T I V E S
R S R O N A E U
T A I L O R F E E B I E R E S
S O V E R S
H E N C E E N D O W M E N T
T R A A T I C H
P O I N T E D L Y N I C H E
N E E R S G H O
R E T R A C T S R I M M E D
I E L A R A L L O
V E R M I F O R M C R I O P
E I N M S E R
T E M P T I N G O P E N D A Y

Latest Road and Weather conditions

Table with columns for region, road number, and condition. Includes entries for UK, Europe, and Motorway.

World City Weather

Table listing weather conditions for various world cities like London, New York, Tokyo, etc.

Motorway

Table listing motorway conditions for different countries like France, Germany, Italy, etc.

Car reports by fax

Did your car get broken down? You may have to get it fixed before you can get on the road.

HIGHEST & LOWEST

Table showing highest and lowest temperatures for various locations.

NEAPAPERS SUPPORT RECYCLING

Recycled paper made up 41.4% of the raw material for UK newspapers in the first half of 1997.

General: after a cold, frosty but bright start across much of England and Wales it will become more cloudy, with patchy light rain and drizzle breaking out in many northern and western areas.

and blustery with outbreaks of rain and drizzle but it will be mild. A strong to gale southwesterly wind. Max 11C (52F).

London, E Anglia, SE, Central S, E England, Channel Isles: cold and frosty at first with hazy sunshine, but clouding over late. A light southerly wind. Max 7C (45F).

Midlands, SW England, Wales, NW England, Lake District, Central N, NE England: after a cold start it will become mild as cloud increases, bringing rain. A fresh south to southwesterly wind. Max 9C (48F).

Isle of Man, N Ireland: cloudy

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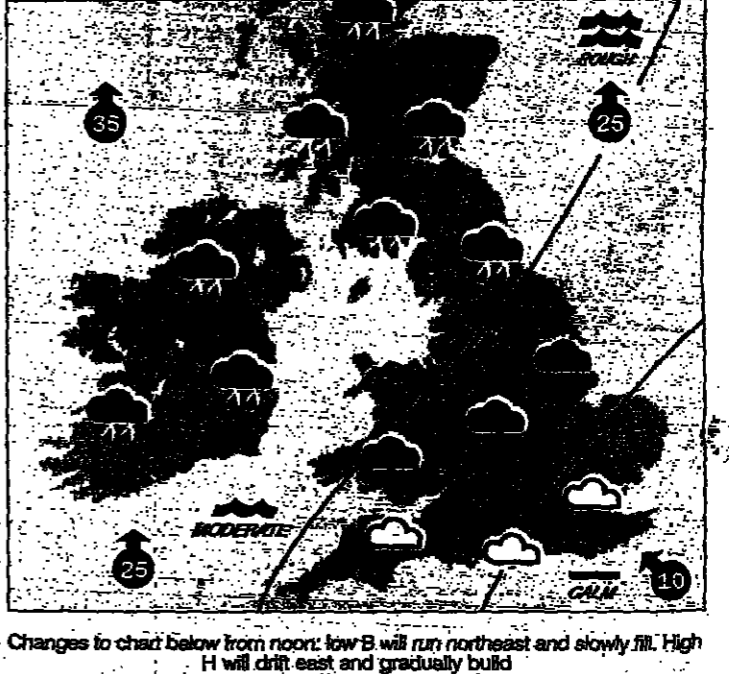
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Isle of Man, N Ireland: cloudy

Changes to chart below from noon: low B will run northeast and slowly fill. High H will drift east and gradually build



Changes to chart below from noon: low B will run northeast and slowly fill. High H will drift east and gradually build



Today

Table showing weather forecasts for various locations including Aberdeen, London, Manchester, etc.

New moon January 28

NEWSPAPERS LIMITED, 1998. Published and printed and distributed for the proprietors by Newsprint Limited, 100, Old Bailey, London EC1A 3DF. Telephone 011-446 2000. Wednesday, January 21, 1998. Registered as a newspaper at the GPO.

THE TIMES

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INSIDE SECTION

2 TODAY



BUSINESS

Sooty — and the bank with a colourful past
PAGE 27



HOMES

Empty houses, so why build so many new ones?
PAGE 37



SPORT

Cork struggles to come to terms with rejection
PAGES 38-44

TELEVISION AND RADIO PAGES 42, 43

BUSINESS EDITOR Patience Wheatcroft

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 21 1998

Link with AHP would create world's biggest drugs group

SmithKline seeks £75bn merger

By PAUL DURMAN



- 1 Worldcom, the US telecommunications group, merged with MCI Communications in October 1, 1997. Value: £22.7 billion.
- 2 Sanofi AG, the Swiss pharmaceutical group, merged with Ciba, the pharmaceutical group, in March 1996. Value: £18.9 billion.
- 3 Kohlberg Kravis Roberts & Co, the US company, acquired RJR Nabisco, the tobacco and food group, in October 1988. Value: £15.4 billion.
- 4 Union Bank of Switzerland merged with the Swiss Bank Corporation last December, leaving many US staff unemployed. Value: £15.2 billion.
- 5 SBC Communications merged with the Pacific Telesis group in April 1996. Value: £14.4 billion.
- 6 Bell Atlantic Corporation merged with Nynex, the telecommunications holding company, in April 1996. Value: £13.5 billion.
- 7 Mitsui Bank merged with the Tokyo-Mitsubishi Bank in August 1989. Value: £12.2 billion.
- 8 Walt Disney merged with ABC, the broadcasting and publishing company, in August 1985. Value: £11.7 billion.
- 9 American First Union Corporation merged with the Core States Financial Corporation in November 1997. Value: £10.3 billion.
- 10 Zurich Versicherungs-Gesellschaft merged with BAT Industries' insurance services divisions in October 1997. Value: £9.9 billion.

SMITHKLINE Beecham, the Anglo-American pharmaceutical group, is pursuing a £75 billion merger with American Home Products that would create the world's biggest drug company.

Such a deal would initially create a company with more than 110,000 employees and sales of about £17 billion. However, much of the benefit from a deal would stem from cost savings estimated at £1.5 billion a year. Rationalising the two sales and distribution networks into one would necessitate many job losses. Neither company will give details of their plans until and if a deal is concluded.

AHP is slightly larger than SmithKline Beecham, with nearly 60,000 employees and sales of £14.1 billion (£9 billion). In the year to September 30, it made \$2.8 billion pre-tax



AHP gave sector early boost

profit from healthcare businesses including Wyeth-Ayerst (pharmaceuticals), Whitehall-Robins (over the counter medicines) and Cyanamid (herbicides and fungicides). In the UK, Wyeth is based near Maidenhead, Berkshire. Its consumer brands include Advil, the painkiller, and Centrum, a vitamin supplement. Combining AHP with

THE market did not know how to react to the news that SmithKline Beecham is in talks with American Home Products. SmithKline Beecham's shares had already enjoyed a sharp 61p rise on Monday as stories circled the market about a possible deal (Jason Nisse writes). Yesterday they shot up more than

70p in early trading to a high of 814.4p, adding an astonishing £3.9 billion to the market value of SmithKline, which at its peak was worth more than £45 billion. Zeneca also received a shot in the arm. It rose nearly 200p to £24.90, adding £1.8 billion to the market value as analysts speculated that if bigger was better in pharmaceutical, the £22 billion Zeneca

was simply too small. But as often in the market, reality sank in. SB fell as its followers realised that it was more likely to be bidding than bid for, and eventually ended 3p down with more than 20 million shares, with a value of more than £140 million, traded. Zeneca also slipped to £23.57. The only people still smiling were the traders.



Jan Leschley, SB chief executive, would see a group with pharmaceutical and vaccine sales of about \$15 billion, putting it ahead of Merck & Co

SmithKline Beecham, led by Jan Leschley, chief executive, would create a group with pharmaceutical and vaccine sales of about \$15 billion, putting it ahead of Merck & Co of the US. Neither of the prospective merger partners would add to their formal statements that confirmed the stockmarket speculation that has produced sharp rises in the share prices

of both companies. SmithKline Beecham gave warning that there could be no assurances that it will reach an agreement with AHP. AHP ran into trouble last year when Redux and Pandimin, its weight-loss drugs, were found to cause heart problems. The company now faces liability claims estimated by some to run to several billion dollars. John

Stafford, its chairman, has recently been ill but has returned to work after a successful operation for prostate cancer. Some analysts believe SmithKline Beecham would not have declared its interest in AHP unless it was comfortable with the size of the Redux liabilities. Other possible problem areas include vaccines and con-

sumer healthcare, where both groups have large businesses that may give regulators and rivals concerns over competition and antitrust issues.

Peter Lating, pharmaceutical analyst at Société Générale Straus & Turnbull, suggested the merged group might have to divest one of the vaccine businesses. He said he did not think this was a "deal-breaker".

SmithKline Beecham's shares initially surged as high as 814.4p on yesterday morning's announcement but ended the day 3p down at 737p. Shares in AHP closed \$11.50 up at \$92.50.

Investors speculated about the possibility of further corporate activity in the pharmaceutical sector. Zeneca, formerly the drugs and agrochemicals arm of ICI, has been a favourite takeover candidate for years, because the City believes it will ultimately prove to be too small to compete with the global giants.

SmithKline Beecham's best known products include Lucozade, Horlicks, Ribena and Aquafresh toothpaste, as well as the range of Beechams cold remedies. However, it makes most of its products from prescription pharmaceuticals such as the antibiotic Augmentin and the anti-depressant Paxil.

Commentary, page 25
Markets, page 26
Chemistry, page 27

BUSINESS TODAY

STOCK MARKET INDEXES	
FTSE 100	5278.2 (+4.4)
Yield	3.08%
FTSE All share	2468.1 (+0.87)
Nikkei	15365.53 (+104.48)
New York	
Dow Jones	7780.45 (+25.80)
S&P Composite	925.2 (+7.25)
US RATE	
Federal Funds	5.75% (unch)
Long Bond	104.72%
Yield	5.75%
LONDON MONEY	
3-month Interbank	7.75% (7.75%)
Libor 3m	123.75 (123.75)
\$ Index	165.2 (165.5)
STERLING	
New York	1.6270 (unch)
London	
\$	1.6294 (1.6357)
DM	2.5975 (2.6043)
FF	10.2360 (10.2830)
SF	2.4400 (2.4520)
Yen	210.01 (210.79)
£ Index	165.2 (165.5)
DOLLAR	
DM	1.6415P (unch)
FF	6.1835P
SF	1.4882P
Yen	128.74P (129.7)
£ Index	165.2 (165.5)
Tokyo close Yen 129.38	
MONTHLY SHARES	
Brant 15-day (Apr)	\$15.80 (\$16.00)
INDEX	
London close	5288.55 (5297.55)
* denotes midday trading price	

Crackdown

A "zero tolerance" crackdown on sharp practice at Lloyd's of London led to many more members being either fined, censured or expelled last year.

Telecoms deal

Hongkong Telecom, the subsidiary of Cable & Wireless, is to receive a compensation package that includes the payment of HK\$6.7 billion (£532 million) for the early termination of its exclusive international telecommunications licence in the former colony.

Reed Elsevier to make £200m offer

By RAYMOND SNODDY, MEDIA EDITOR
REED ELSEVIER, the international information and publishing group, is to offer advertisers about £200 million in compensation for "irregularities" in circulation claims made by publications in its Reed Travel Group subsidiary. Last September Reed Elsevier revealed that Reed Travel Group had effectively overcharged advertisers between 1991 and 1997, because of inflated circulation figures. Compensation will go to advertisers in some of Reed's hotel and airline directories. Reed's hotel directory titles include Hotel & Travel Index and Official Hotel Guide. The travel business magazines include Travel Weekly, Travel Age and Meetings and Conventions. The Airline Guides group includes the OAG Pocket Flight Guides and OAG World Airways Guides. Reed Elsevier has not identified the publications where the "irregularities" occurred. Compensation terms will be based on a detailed assessment by independent accountants, lawyers and circulation auditors. Details of the offers are being put to advertisers, but agreement could take some time. More than 4,000 hotels are involved in the case of hotel directories. In addition to the estimated £200 million cost, there will also be a substantial non-cash writedown of the relevant intangible assets of Reed Travel Group. At the end of 1996 the value was £472 million. The writedown is expected to be more than £200 million. Reed International shares rose 13p to 655p yesterday. Reed is considering legal action in an attempt to recover some of the costs.

Walmsley gets bonus of £150,000

NIGEL WALMSLEY, who heads the broadcasting arm of Carlton Communications, received a £150,000 discretionary bonus for his work on the successful joint Carlton/Granada bid for the British terrestrial digital television licence (Jason Nisse writes). The bonus was in addition to an annual salary of £245,000 and benefits of £19,500. His performance-related bonus, in a year when Carlton profits rose 10 per cent, was just £9,200. The discretionary bonus was justified by Carlton, a spokesman saying that Mr Walmsley had worked exceptionally hard to create a business that analysts value at as much as £1 billion. But one pension fund manager said: "Discretionary bonuses are not things we usually encourage." BSkyB deadline, page 24

Pru's shares hit by mixed report

By MARIANNE CURPHEY, INSURANCE CORRESPONDENT
SHARES in Prudential Corporation fell by 4 per cent yesterday when the insurer unveiled a mixed set of new business figures for 1997 after the acquisition of Scottish Amicable and the departure of Jim Sutcliffe, head of Prudential's UK operations. The shares fell 32p, to 764p, in spite of total worldwide business rising 19 per cent, to £7.2 billion (excluding a one-off £500 million group annuity sale in 1996). However, the robust figure disguised a slowdown in three core markets towards the end of the year, and analysts were cautious about business prospects going forward in 1998. US sales slowed more than expected in 1997's final quarter after almost two years' strong growth. UK sales were dented after Prudential decided to retrain sales staff in the third quarter. Mr Sutcliffe left the Pru abruptly in September, and the Financial Services Authority rebuked it in December. Jackson National Life, Prudential's US subsidiary, saw business drop off in the last quarter as lower US interest depressed demand for annuity products. Overall, single premium sales rose by 18 per cent, to £2.9 billion. Analysts said that because products of Scottish Amicable, acquired in October, were sold heavily through independent financial advisers (IFAs), Prudential's IFA business was likely to suffer. Prudential said there is "virtually no overlap". Scottish Amicable contributed £109 million to the total UK new single premium business of £3.6 billion, and £21 million of the £330 million total new regular premium sales.

Guinness Mahon put up for sale

By JASON NISSE AND RICHARD MILES
GUINNESS MAHON, the 162-year-old bank that almost collapsed eight years ago, has been put up for sale by Bank of Yokohama, its Japanese owner. The City expects it to command a price of about £120 million. Yokohama has appointed SBC Warburg Dillon Read to advise it on the sale after a decision late last year to shrink its international network and concentrate on the domestic Japanese market. The bank hopes to sell off six companies in the Guinness Mahon group — including the bank itself and Henderson Crosthwaite, the stockbroker — as a single package. Any deal will exclude Guinness Mahon Development Capital, the venture capital arm, which is negotiating its own management buyout. David Potter, Guinness Mahon's chief executive, said that there had been a number of approaches even before Yokohama put it up for sale. It is thought that about ten companies have expressed an interest, including some banks which took a look at BZW before its eventual sale. The sale announcement will also spark renewed speculation about Guinness Flight Hambro Asset Management, in which the group holds a 44 per cent stake. A similarly sized stake held by Hambros Group is believed to be for sale after the disposal of its investment bank.

Pound eases as Bank reveals fears



By ALASDAIR MURRAY, ECONOMICS CORRESPONDENT
THE pound eased back below DM3.00 yesterday after Eddie George described the current high levels of sterling as uncomfortable. The Governor of the Bank of England told the House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities that the Bank was troubled by the current strength of the pound. The comments prompted concern in the market that the Bank is seeking to cap the latest surge in sterling, which reached a five-month high on Monday. The pound closed down at DM2.9972, having climbed to DM3.0143 in early trading. Analysts said it is likely to resume its climb if retail sales data released today shows consumer spending remains strong. Robust high street spending, coupled with evidence of a tightening labour market, have increased pressure on the Bank to raise rates again next month. But the Credit Card Research Group said yesterday that card spending in December had been mixed. Total spending on credit and debit cards topped £10 billion, the highest recorded monthly spend. But annual growth in card spending slipped to 13 per cent, well below levels in the summer. Mr George also told the committee that he felt there was little chance that the economic crisis in Asia will cause global deflation. A number of senior economists, including Alan Greenspan, Chairman of the Federal Reserve, have raised the spectre that economic collapse in Asia may prompt deflation in the rest of the world. But Mr George said he felt this was an "extreme view of the situation" and did not see "great signs of it". He also said that the battle to head the future European central bank — between Claude Trichet, governor of the Bank of France, and Wim Duisenberg, head of the European Monetary Institute — is damaging the credibility of the single currency project.

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Crackdown at Lloyd's sees rise in fines

By ADAM JONES

A "ZERO tolerance" crackdown on sharp practice at Lloyd's of London led to many more members being fined, censured or expelled last year.

Formal disciplinary proceedings were started against 21 individuals and companies, up from four in 1996. Nineteen members were found guilty of serious misconduct in 1997, with some cases continuing.

Offences ranged from brokers taking secret profits to a motor syndicate manager taking two stolen cars when they were recovered.

Summary disciplinary proceedings were started against 27 members when lesser offences were suspected, up from 12 in 1996. A further 65 received formal warnings for minor infringements, up from 53.

A Lloyd's report admitted: "Many of the offences investigated arose as a result of a lack of understanding of accepted business practice and the requirements of civil law."

David Gittings, director of

regulation, said about 20 per cent of members were failing to comply with expected standards of business practice. He said this figure was similar in other financial markets.

Mr Gittings said his regulation division would concentrate on protecting Lloyd's from the kind of incestuous risk-sharing and under-reserving that nearly destroyed the society in the late 1980s.

An investigation into the insuring of the Hibernia, the largest single offshore structure in the world, revealed that several underwriters were exposing investors to more risk than they had been led to expect.

The society also said there was a danger that reinsurers will once again expose themselves to a "spiral" of unseen risks from other syndicates because they are desperate for business.

In 1997 Lloyd's introduced a prototype transaction monitoring system similar in principle to that used by the Stock Exchange to regulate share dealing. This will be further developed in 1998. The regulation of brokers will also be reviewed.

Lloyd's expects an announcement from the Government this month on its future relationship with the Financial Services Authority, the new City watchdog. Lloyd's wants to be overseen by the FSA, while still policing itself in a delegated role.

The society admitted, however, that staff turnover in the regulatory division — more than 20 per cent — had been a problem, as it had in other regulatory bodies.

Lloyd's has admitted making 288 mistakes in a batch of payment demands sent of payment demands sent to names. The admission relates to ongoing court proceedings brought against several hundred names who are refusing to pay sums demanded for the society's past losses.



Stephen Littlechild said the programme for competition had hit technical problems

Regulator postpones shake-up deadline

By CHRISTINE BUCKLEY
INDUSTRIAL CORRESPONDENT

DOMESTIC households will have to wait five more months to shop around for electricity after the regulator confirmed that the ambitious programme for domestic competition had hit technical problems.

The move, blamed on the computer networks, has incensed British Gas which has demanded an immediate halt to competition in the gas market.

Electricity companies will face total fines of £50 million for missing the April deadline which will be paid via small bill reductions for customers — about 50p a month per household.

Professor Stephen Littlechild, the regulator, set the new deadline — five months from the April deadline — with the publication of a key report on the industry's progress on competition from PA Consulting.

A further statement is likely from John Battle, the Energy Minister, when he meets industry chiefs and the regulator tomorrow.

The delay is a personal embarrassment for Mr Battle who took personal responsibility for the success of the project soon after last year's general election.

British Gas, which has spent millions advertising its plan to sell electricity, is urging the Government and the regulators to halt further deregulation of the gas market because electricity companies have been able to gain market share while their own market remains closed to competitors.

TOURIST RATES

	Bank Buy	Bank Sell
Australia \$	2.55	2.57
Austria Sch	22.08	20.42
Belgium Fr	64.82	60.03
Canada \$	2.470	2.382
Cyprus Cyp£	0.280	0.248
Denmark Kr	12.01	11.12
Finland Mk	5.82	6.87
France Fr	10.48	9.71
Germany Dm	3.15	2.92
Greece Dr	498	459
Hong Kong \$	13.44	12.54
Iceland	131	111
Ireland P	1.24	1.15
Israel Sh	6.25	5.61
Italy Lit	3120	2883
Japan Yen	224.73	207.20
Malta	0.686	0.526
Netherlands Gld	3.568	3.273
New Zealand \$	2.93	2.70
Norway Kr	12.97	12.03
Portugal Esc	318.03	287.00
S Africa Rd	8.91	7.85
Spain Ptas	265.29	246.50
Sweden Kr	13.98	12.88
Switzerland Fr	2.59	2.38
Turkey Lira	357.117	332.239
USA \$	1.736	1.593

Rates for small denomination bank notes only as supplied by Barclays Bank PLC. Different rates apply to traveller's cheques. Rates as at close of trading yesterday.

Car output highest since 1974

By KEVIN EASON, MOTORING EDITOR

CAR production fell dramatically in the last six months of 1997, as the strong price of sterling cut into exports.

Total output last year, however, was almost 1.7 million, the highest figure since 1974, with exports running at their highest proportion of production since 1952.

Fifty-seven per cent of new

cars made in Britain were sent overseas last year, compared with 54 per cent the year before, as the big three Japanese manufacturers in Britain — Toyota, Honda and Nissan — increased production and

Vauxhall and Rover both improved exports.

The surge was in the first half as carmakers capitalised

on Britain as an attractive manufacturing base.

The concern for carmakers came in the second six months to December, which saw a 4.7 per cent fall in output, compared with 1996. Exports were down 5.1 per cent, with production for the home market down 4.3 per cent. Total car production fell 1.8 per cent,

compared with the first six months, reflecting the growth in imports in the UK and the slowdown caused by the strength of sterling on foreign exchange markets.

Carmakers expect static sales next year across Europe, with no big improvements until the millennium, depending on economic factors.

Commission fee disclosure fails to cut policy costs

By CAROLINE MERRELL

RULES brought in three years ago to make the charges on investment policies more transparent have failed to make companies more competitive on price, according to the Personal Investment Authority (PIA), the financial services watchdog.

A report released yesterday compared the costs of different policies three years after the introduction of a disclosure regime, which for the first time told consumers the true costs of their policies, including up-front commission.

For example, three years ago, the commission paid to an independent financial adviser from a typical 25-year pension policy would be equivalent to two-thirds of the first year's premium. At the end of last year, the commission figure was found to be exactly the same. On endowment plans, once the favoured method of saving to pay off a mortgage, 88 per cent of the first year's premium is used up in paying IFA commission, three years ago the figure was only marginally higher at 90 per cent.

According to the report, the average amount of commission paid in total on a £60-per-month personal pension policy is between £515 and £649. Company salesmen on average earned more than independent financial advisers. The report found that the maximum commission paid on such a policy could be as high as £1,252.

Commission is not the only charge levied by life insurance and investment companies, other charges include fund management costs and policy fees. The report found that together all the costs cut a projected 7.5 per cent yield on a personal pension by between 0.8 per cent and 1.8 per cent.

Three years ago, the equivalent figures were 0.8 per cent and 1.9 per cent. London & Manchester, Colonial and Reliance Mutual were among the highest-charging offices.

The PIA also looked at charges on personal equity plans (PEPs). The highest-charging PEP companies included Commercial Union and Jupiter. The latter sold among the highest number of PEPs last year.

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BUSINESS ROUNDUP

BA pilots offered two-year pay deal

BRITISH AIRWAYS pilots are being asked to accept a two-year pay deal that would give rises above the rate of inflation — in contrast to the hostile confrontation of two summers ago. The British Air Line Pilots Association (Balpa) has approved an offer of RPI plus 0.5 per cent, the same as the formula agreed in 1996. The offer would be worth 4.2 per cent this year. Pilots will meet over the next two weeks to consider their response.

BA's pilots threatened to ground the fleet two summers ago, after negotiations over pay and working practices broke down. The pay dispute was settled, but unresolved issues remain, particularly with respect to Euro Garwick, the hub for BA's European services. Unions are suspicious about developments at AML, also based at Garwick, which will take over many of BA's long-haul holiday routes from the summer of 1999, using Boeing 777s. Pilots suspect further belt-tightening — such as using two flight crew rather than three. Mike Sparham, assistant general secretary of Balpa, said: "There are still some difficult issues to be resolved, but this is a good start." BA said talks over pay were continuing across the company.

Boots buys Irish chain

BOOTS is joining the British retailers crowding the high street in the Republic of Ireland with the £12.5 million acquisition of Hayes Conyngham and Robinson, the country's largest chemist chain. The deal, which comes 18 months after Boots first expanded into Dublin, adds a further 15 outlets to the five it already runs. It will also make millionaires of Michael and Christopher Shiell, two brothers who built up the chain in Dublin and Cork over the past 15 years.

Blacks options exercised

SIMON BENTLEY, chairman and chief executive of Blacks Leisure, yesterday made £425,000 by exercising options over 100,000 shares at 40p in the retailer, which he received as part of the employee share ownership plan, and selling them at 46.5p. He also exercised another 50,000 options at 50p, which he is retaining. In addition Tom Knight, the managing director of the retail side, exercised 20,000 options at 74.4p and sold them at a profit of £78,000. The company has thrived from the sports goods boom, owning the First Sport chain.

Big screen deal projected

HICKS, Muse Tate & Furst and Kohlberg Kravis Roberts, the investment firms, have announced plans to buy Regal Cinemas in a \$1.5 billion (£900 million) deal that would create the world's largest chain of cinemas. The partnership will create a chain with 5,347 screens at 727 cinemas in 35 states. The investment firms plan to combine Regal, which has 2,333 screens in North America, with United Artists Theatre Group, which Hicks, Muse recently bought for \$850 million, and Act III Cinemas, which KKR bought last month for \$660 million.

British Gas picks Logica

LOGICA, the computer services company whose shares have almost doubled in value in the past six months, has won a £7.1 million contract to look after the main computers of British Gas Services for the next three years. The deal covers computers that generate bills, contact systems and contracts and will involve the deployment of 24 consultants to work full-time with Centrica. Logica will also be writing original software for the company to develop its systems further. Its shares, which traded at 67.3p last summer, fell 17.1p to £13.27.

Butte requests delisting

BUTTE MINING yesterday formally requested to be delisted from the Stock Exchange. The shares have been suspended for a year and the directors concluded that the costs of complying with listing requirements were too onerous to be worthwhile. The crux came when the exchange insisted that Butte convene a meeting to approve the sale of mining land in the US state of Montana. The delisting ends a ten-year saga that followed a rights issue to buy a Montana-based operation and which has resulted in a Serious Fraud Office inquiry and legal actions.

Bucknall delivers a rise

BUCKNALL GROUP, the project delivery and facilities company, raised its pre-tax profits to £510,000 from £354,000 in the half year to October 31. Earnings increased 58 per cent to 1.9p a share from 1.2p and the dividend was up 32 per cent to 0.33p a share from 0.25p a share. Richard Miles, the Bucknall chairman, said that the domestic market remained strong, helping the group to maintain progress in the second half. The shares rose 1p to 64p.

Jarvis wins contract

JARVIS has won a £26 million contract to carry out inspection and repair services for Royal & SunAlliance, the big UK composite insurer. The three-year contract involves Jarvis providing an inspection and repair service to domestic insurance policyholders in the North. Jarvis expects to handle 9,000 jobs a year. It is one of the largest domestic repair contracts awarded to a facilities management company. Jarvis's role is to carry out initial surveys and valuations when claims arise and to call in specialist sub-contractors when necessary.

Barbour lifts dividend

BARBOUR INDEX, the supplier of specialist information services, lifted its interim dividend 5 per cent to 3.30p per share for the half year to October 31 although pre-tax profits fell to £1.8 million from £1.9 million and earnings declined to 7.2p a share from 7.5p. Net cash remains strong at £3.25 million, down slightly from £3.96 million a year ago. The shares were unchanged at 185p. Katherine Tickle, managing director, said a significant increase in sales was expected in the second half.

BDB given until end of the month to make payment

BSkyB sets deadline for £60m

By RAYMOND SNOODI
MEDIA EDITOR

BRITISH Sky Broadcasting, the satellite television venture, has given digital terrestrial broadcaster British Digital Broadcasting until the end of this month to come up with a £60 million payment which it claims is now overdue. The demand is being backed by a writ that has been taken out but not yet served.

The payments arise from the tangled regulatory history of British Digital Broadcasting which was originally a consortium bringing together BSKyB,

Carlton Communications and Granada. The Independent Television Commission decided that BDB should get the main commercial digital terrestrial licences but that BSKyB should not be a shareholder. The satellite venture, in which News International publisher of *The Times* has a 40 per cent stake, had to make its TV channels available as part of the licence agreement.

The remaining partners of BDB agreed to pay BSKyB £75 million compensation for losing the right to be a shareholder.

The deal was for a down

payment of £15 million followed by £60 million seven days after the digital terrestrial licence was actually granted. The ITC granted the licence on December 19. When the money did not appear on schedule, BSKyB issued a formal warning that legal action would be taken if the payment was not made within 48 hours.

Gerry Robinson, chairman of both BSKyB and Granada, was not involved in the negotiations because of the potential conflict of interest.

It is believed that Mark Booth, the new chief executive of BSKyB, met Michael Green,

the Carlton chairman at a social event and agreed informally on the new end-of-month deadline. An attempt to stop the writ failed because it had already been issued.

It is understood BDB is contesting some elements of the original agreement with BSKyB including the fact that the satellite group has still not managed to get agreement on the digital terrestrial rights for the Sky Sports and Sky Screen channels which will be part of the BDB package.

Carlton Communications declined to comment yesterday.

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COMMENTARY
by our City Editor

Three weeks into 1998, SmithKline Beecham is doing its best to justify the tenuous logic that sustains the boom in Western stock markets. This, say the bulls, will be the year of global mergers.

When Glaxo bought Wellcome, it consciously blazed a trail. Drug companies needed to move on from the glorious but doomed era of superdrugs that commanded super prices. The future for pharmaceuticals was more prosaic. The research supply chain had to churn out regular quantum improvements in treatment at lower unit cost to attract the pursed-lipped, tight-fisted buying authorities that are assuming ever greater power in America and Europe.

As soon as you look at the industry in this way, the scope for consolidation seems immense. The market has become global but the players, though vast, are small by comparison. They can safely follow the merger route to cost-cutting.

Glaxo Wellcome, a giant by most standards, still commands less than 5 per cent of the world market. Novartis, the later combination of the Ciba-Geigy and Sandoz drugs businesses, is on the same scale. SmithKline Beecham plus like-sized American Home Products would reach one-tenth higher on the ladder of global market share.

SmithKline Beecham has successfully evolved the rapid return approach to new drugs since its

own merger nearly a decade ago. American Home Products, though of similar size, spread and profile, looks less dynamic. A merger would be about cost-cutting and marketing power. It would also shift the enlarged group's centre of gravity decisively across the Atlantic.

Stale bulls of Zeneca, Astra and other perennial bid candidates, will hope that this unexpected development comes to nought. They may be proved right, although their own enthusiasm may well be deterring the deals they want. Is Zeneca really worth 3.4 times ICL, its former parent, as the market tells us?

Whatever the outcome of these now public talks, the clear desire of both SB and AHP to meld their initials with someone else will surely lead to each being involved in some deal or other. They need to satisfy the crude expectations now aroused.

They will also underwrite the judgment of those who confidently anticipate more European and global consolidation in insurance, banking and telecommunications, as well as in humbler sectors such as motor components. The Zurich-BAT insurance merger, and the more complex French/German/Italian

deal are clearly part of continuing process. Telecoms are still in flux. The behaviour of UK banks tells a different story. Get-togethers in domestic retail lending are being paralleled by a progressive shrinkage of the UK investment banking sector at the behest of progressive City thinkers. Perhaps they haven't noticed that the mega-mergers they want will only reliably benefit the sector they have been so keen to eliminate.

Mission impossible over charges?

The corporate mission statement, alas, is no longer the sole preserve of American businesses. The urge to proclaim in sanctimonious prose such sentiments as a determination to be the most caring widget maker in the West now provides the cringe factor in many British annual reports. Even the Per-

sonal Investment Authority, soon to be subsumed into the Financial Services Authority, has espoused the trend. It seems that part of its *raison d'être* is the enabling of investors to make properly informed decisions in an open, competitive and innovative marketplace.

But it seems that investors are not in the least interested in supporting the PIA's efforts. The worthy words of the mission statement have translated into demands on the savings industry to open their books and provide a welter of information on costs, charges and commissions. And on the PIA's own evidence, investors have averted their eyes and carried on as before.

The research published yesterday shows charges have barely moved, despite three years of the disclosures which were supposed to drive them down. Far from being embarrassed by the level of costs and commissions, savings companies

and those who sell their policies have brazened it out and relied on the lethargy, or financial illiteracy, of their customers to keep the profits up.

Optimists might hope that savers are probing the figures and coming to the view that they will pay heavy charges in return for the best performance. Sadly, as a recent *Money Marketing* survey highlighted, the highest charges often accompany the lowest performance. Few investors, it seems, are impressed with the PIA's mission to inform.

This conclusion gains added credence from the latest figures from Prudential. Rarely has a financial organisation had such a public lambasting as the Pru, first from Treasury Minister Helen Liddell and then from the mighty regulator, the FSA.

Yet it seems that despite the vigorous criticism of its handling of the pensions mis-selling episode, the Pru remains largely unscathed in the eyes of the

British investor. The group's new business figures for the UK show customers continuing to sign with the Pru.

The slower fourth-quarter can be explained by the fact that the entire salesforce had to be taken off the road and retrained before it could be let loose on the public. All that stopped investors buying was that the Pru was not selling.

Guinness for strength

The Bank of Yokohama's decision to sell Guinness Mahon has, apparently, nothing to do with the financial climate back home but is merely a logical step in the implementation of a medium-term business plan implemented in April last year. Of course.

Japanese bankers have their own unique approach to business and ploughing fortunes into a company only to sell it when it is giving every indication of an increasingly bright future may be their idea of a medium-term business plan. Guinness Mahon's corporate finance arm would soon wither if it were doing out similar advice to clients. Instead, the client list is

growing because the bank, under the able leadership of David Potter, is concentrating its efforts on those companies with market capitalisations between £30 and £300 million. The sight lines of the media banks have risen far above this level, but while they scramble for clients such as SB, there are plentiful pickings for the less ambitious.

Guinness Mahon is not alone in happily catering for these medium-sized companies: Singer & Friedlander and Close Brothers are amongst others enjoying the fun. Each has developed a special expertise — media and film for GM. Recent British box office hits *Wild* and the zany *Shooting Fish* were both financed by the bank.

For a star-struck financier with at least £200 million to spend, Mr Potter could probably offer an assured seat at all the best film premiers.

Bad circulation

FACED with a bill of up to £400 million for using false circulation figures, Reed Elsevier is naturally looking for someone to sue. Intriguingly, though, the advertisers who will receive £200 million compensation include many regular customers. They kept coming back, in spite of the fact, now admitted, that they were not reaching anything like the market they thought. There is a moral there somewhere and other publishers may find it.

Hongkong Telecom wins £532m settlement

By Raymond Snoddy, Media Editor

HONGKONG TELECOM, the subsidiary of Cable & Wireless, is to receive a compensation package that includes the payment of HK\$6.7 billion (£532 million) for the early termination of its exclusive international telecommunications licence in the former colony.

Under the agreement with the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, Hong Kong Telecom International will surrender its exclusive international licence at the end of March. It will remain the only international operator until new licences for competing

international services take effect on January 1 next year.

Talks have been going on for 18 months on compensation terms over the main HKT licence, issued in 1981 and due to run until 2006. C&W owns 54.2 per cent of Hongkong Telecom.

The agreement also includes the ending of the restrictions on Hongkong Telecom's charges for residential telephone lines. At the moment the lines are provided at below cost because of a subsidy from the international telephone service.

The current monthly charge of HK\$68.90 will rise to no more than HK\$110 from January 2001 and all restrictions will be removed from the beginning of 2002. The cap on charges for business line rentals will be removed from July.

Linus W. L. Cheung, chief executive of Hongkong Telecom, said yesterday that the agreement "balances the interests of all stakeholders and provides fair compensation to Hongkong Telecom for giving up a valuable asset".

When the telephone company surrenders the international licence it will get half the money, with the balance due at the beginning of July.

The money will go straight to the balance sheet of Hongkong Telecom as an exceptional payment and will be used for network development in Hong Kong and to take advantage of opportunities expected to open up in China.

There has been competition on local telephone calls in Hong Kong for the past two years. The entitlement to progressively increase monthly charges for residential lines over three years is subject to Hongkong Telecom expanding the number of these lines made available for access by competing operators.

Andrew Harrington, a Salomon Brothers analyst, said the agreement was evidence that relations between C&W and China were not as frosty as some supposed. "I think it's a pretty good deal all round and the outcome for HK Telecom is better than any of the bears have been saying."

"The agreement confirms the good relations between C&W and China, because much of the progress on the deal seems to have been made since the transition [to Chinese rule]."

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Alders and Ted Baker thrive at Christmas

By Fraser Nelson

ALLIDERS and Ted Baker took their places among the stronger high street performers yesterday, both returning Christmas sales growth well above the market average.

Alders, which runs 20 department stores in England, said like-for-like sales advanced 8.7 per cent in its first quarter — in line with City expectations.

Harvey Lipsith, chief executive, said the post-Christmas sales period had been especially strong, with takings up 12.4 per cent in the first three weeks.

The company held its margins in the period, but said the economic climate was "clearly tightening".

Ted Baker, the fashion retailer, enjoyed a 30 per cent increase in sales in the last two months before Christmas, of which 11 per cent was like-for-like.

Ray Kelvin, its chief executive who owns 45 per cent of the shares, said margins had been maintained. He added that the company had been helped by the "trading up" effect where more people saved money for designer clothes. "We have been lucky because people have spent more money buying the shirt they want over Christmas."

The company scored an advertising coup last May when Euan Blair, the Prime Minister's eldest son, wore a Ted Baker sweatshirt on the day of the general election result as he entered Downing Street — assuring the company worldwide publicity. The shares, which joined the market at 140p last summer, added 5p to 157p.



Martin Gatto, left, Somerfield's finance director, and David Simons, chief executive, saw their company's like-for-like sales rise only 0.3 per cent

Cost savings boost Somerfield profit

By Fraser Nelson

SOMERFIELD has missed out on the supermarket boom that has buoyed its larger rivals in the past six months — but it has returned record half-year profits after achieving extra £5 million of cost savings.

The company, which also runs Gateway and Food Giant stores, yesterday said that its like-for-like

sales grew by only 0.3 per cent at the half-year stage, although pre-tax profits jumped by 12 per cent, to £60.9 million.

However, the company refused to comment on City speculation that it is close to selling some of its 600 stores — or agreeing a complete takeover bid.

David Simons, chief executive, said that the margin growth came from a deal with two similar supermarket chains in The Netherlands and France,

by which they clubbed together to seek better prices from suppliers.

Mr Simons said: "The story is of margin improvement, and there is no reason why this should not continue for the foreseeable future."

The group's 450 Somerfield stores did best, with underlying volume growth of 2.4 per cent. The company invested £75 million in refurbishments and converting the top end of its remaining 113

Gateway stores to the Somerfield format. Gateway's underlying volumes fell 2.8 per cent. The 27 Food Giant stores — which are for sale — suffered a 5.8 per cent volume decline.

Overall, gross margin grew from 4.96 per cent to 5.23 per cent. Earnings per share rose to 17.8p (4.9p). The interim dividend is 3.8p, up 11 per cent.

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Ushers attempts to lift price with bullish statement

By Dominic Walsh

USHERS of Trowbridge, the Wiltshire brewer and pub operator, floated last year, attempted to boost its flagging share price yesterday with a bullish statement on prospects.

Its shares, placed at 110p last March, dived after a veiled profit warning in November, and Roger North, chief executive, was unable to hide his frustration. "You would think we were going bust," he said. "Perhaps it's because we're small and we're new, but I don't think people are looking at the fundamentals. The underlying business is excellent." The shares responded with a 2p rise to 72p.

In a bid to boost earnings and take advantage of the weak price, the board is to seek shareholder approval to buy back some shares. Mr North and Tom Vynner, non-executive chairman, each bought 30,000 shares at 72p yesterday.

In the year ended October

31, profits before tax and exceptional items rose 3 per cent to £11 million, on turnover up 8 per cent to £70.5 million. Adjusted earnings per share were up 9 per cent to 10.1p and a final dividend of 1.95p, payable on March 16, makes 3.87p

Tempus, page 26



North: frustrated

US groups develop new modem

From Oliver August in New York

MICROSOFT, Compaq and Intel, the computer groups, are jointly developing a new phone modem that will make access to the Internet up to 30 times faster. The product threatens to undermine BT's sales strategy of putting separate high-speed ISDN phone lines into UK homes and small businesses.

The new modem will channel electronic traffic through existing phone lines without blocking the line for person-to-person calls and is expected to be on the market by Christmas.

Leading US telephone companies are also involved in the development of the modem and details will be announced at a telecommunications conference in Washington next week.

BT said it would evaluate new technology as it entered the market. A spokesman said: "ISDN lines currently account for 30 per cent of new business lines."

Wall Street banks suffer effects of Asian turmoil

From Oliver August in New York

WALL STREET banks yesterday reported that fourth-quarter results had been reduced significantly by problems in Asian markets.

J.P. Morgan said its fourth-quarter earnings declined by 35 per cent to \$271 million (£163 million). Losses were particularly heavy in Asian derivatives, it said, and bad debts in Asia increased sevenfold. The results were below analysts' expectations in spite of a profit warning last month.

Merrill Lynch, Citicorp and Chase Manhattan said investment banking fees had risen but overall results were hurt by trading losses in Asia.

John Reed, chairman of Citicorp, said: "It was anything but a normal quarter. The Asian turmoil reduced our pre-tax results by about \$250 million." Citicorp's profits rose 7.5 per cent to \$1.1 billion. George Salem, an analyst at

Gerard Klauer Mattison, said: "Asia hit them pretty good. Discretionary gains covered up what could have been a disappointing quarter."

Citicorp lost \$188 million from trading compared with a gain of \$271 million last year. Emerging market problems also made a dent in the group's credit card business which reported a 26 per cent income loss.

Chase Manhattan, the largest US bank, reported that profits decreased 6 per cent to \$850 million. The bank lost \$78 million on trading compared with a previous gain of \$286 million.

At Merrill Lynch profits rose 5 per cent to \$466 million, below analysts' expectations. David Komansky, chairman, said: "Recent events in Asia and unsettled conditions in US markets could indicate a more challenging environment for our industry in 1998."

Robinson to face BSA criticism over Isa

By Anne Ashworth

GEOFFREY ROBINSON, the millionaire Paymaster General, is today expected to mount a defence of the individual savings account (Isa), the Government's already highly unpopular new tax savings scheme that he has made his special concern.

Since its launch last month, the Isa has found no friends, with its low lifetime investment ceiling being con-

trasted with Mr Robinson's huge offshore wealth.

Joining the chorus of criticism likely to greet Mr Robinson at a conference being held in Edinburgh will be the Building Societies Association. Adrian Coles, BSA director-general, will argue that the Isa is less attractive than the personal equity plans (Peps) and tax exempt special savings accounts (Tessas) it will replace.

The BSA's fundamental objection to

the scheme is the preferential treatment being given to equity investment over cash.

Under the proposals, contained in a consultation document published last month, investors will be allowed to put in just £1,000 in cash every year, while £4,000 may be put into life insurance policies, shares and unit trusts.

Private client stockbrokers took issue with the Isa yesterday. Angela Knight, the former Economic Secretary to the

Treasury who now heads APCIMS, the private client investment manager and brokers' organisation said that the lifetime Isa limit of £50,000 was too low.

She suggested that all amounts currently saved in Peps and Tessas should be frozen when Isas were introduced. Investors would continue to receive tax relief on these holdings, but would also be able to contribute an additional £50,000 into Isas.

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STOCK MARKET

MICHAEL CLARK
Stock Market Writer
of the Year

Sterling continues to hammer UK exporters

THE runaway pound dipped back below the DM3 level on the world's foreign exchange markets but provided little comfort for Britain's big exporters and overseas earners.



Sir Peter Davis saw shares react to a slowdown in the US

Eddie George, Governor of the Bank of England, told the European Communities Select Committee of the House of Lords that the strength of the pound was proving uncomfortable for his independent Monetary Policy Committee and "more than uncomfortable" for the exporters. But he was unable to offer the latter any crumbs of comfort.

They spent another awkward day on the stock market where millions were wiped from their companies' values. Leading the way down was LucasVarity, 8.4p lower, or almost 4 per cent, at 198.4p. It was followed by Smiths Industries, 25p to 730p, BOC Group, 27p to 853p, ICI, 16p to 907p, Stebe, 23p to 810.2p, Tomkins, 7p to 324p, Weir Group, 21p to 228p, and Mecklenko, 12p to 380.2p.

Will it take on Hercules of the US in the battle for control of Allied Colloids, up 3p at 182.5p? Ciba made an offer of 182.5p on Monday, topping the initial terms from Hercules, which responded by raising its offer to 195p. This values Allied Colloids at £1.3 billion.

Profit-taking left Proteus International 7p lower at 76p. The shares rose sharply on Monday in response to the news that an Irish supermarket chain has begun selling beef tested for BSE. Each carcass tested costs £20 from which Proteus receives a £2 royalty.

Plans to scale back next year's store opening programme left Partners Holdings 7.5p down at 52.5p despite the stationary retailer reporting a significant increase in sales over Christmas. Still reeling from this week's profit warning Body Shop slipped a further 2p to 125.5p.

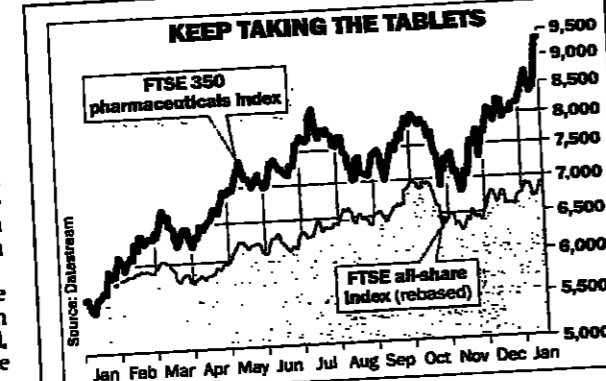
Smith & Nephew firmed 4p to 177.5p as HSCB James Capel moved the shares from a "hold" to "add". Tradepoint Financial Services firmed 3p to 66.5p as Nic Stutchfield, a director, acquired 10,000 shares at 65p.

The rest of the equity market sported only modest gains at the close after a 47-point turnaround with the FTSE 100 index ending 4.6 up at 5,278.2. An early lead, inspired by the confirmation of merger talks between SmithKline Beecham and American Home Products, was countered by an uncertain start to trading on Wall Street.

But turnover levels were high with more than a billion shares changing hands. Shell, 3.4p dearer at 409.5p, was the heaviest traded stock in the top 100 with turnover of 25.1 million shares.

Several large lines of stock also went through the market. Sime Darby, the Malaysian company, has placed its entire 7.63 per cent stake in Elements, down 2p at 128.5p. ABN Amro Hoare Govett, the broker, placed 5.6 million shares with various institutions at 125p. Total turnover in the shares reached 109.5 million.

There was also wide selling of Laporte, down 16.5p at 617.5p. Brokers reported a line of 5.91 million shares going through the market at a heavily discounted 590p. Turnover in the shares totalled 12.57 million.



KEEP TAKING THE TABLETS

SmithKline Beecham touched 814.5p on confirmation of the merger talks with American Home Products before settling to close 3p dearer at 740p. There was a similar knee-jerk reaction by the other drug companies to the news with Glaxo Wellcome racing up to £17.01 before closing 3p dearer at £16.69 and Zeneca leaping 60p to an all-time high of £23.7.

Takovers and mergers have been a way of life among the drug companies for a number of years, so can the current ratings be justified or has the sector had its day? Steve Abbott at Credit Lyonnais Laing, the broker, is confident there is still more to go for.

He said: "I would say so. The fundamentals have still not been taken fully into account. The market has always undervalued the drug companies." Mr Abbott is convinced that there is still plenty of upside in SB once the deal is completed. "The shares will hold steady around the 700p level if the deal does not go ahead but I have set a target price of 900p if it does," he added.

MAJOR INDICES

Table of major stock indices including New York (midday), Tokyo, Hong Kong, Amsterdam, Sydney, Frankfurt, Singapore, Brussels, Paris, Zurich, London, and others.

RECENT ISSUES

Table of recent stock issues including Abbey Nat Dublin, BOC Technologies, Bond Int Software, etc.

RIGHTS ISSUES

Table of rights issues including Calluna n/p (9).

MAJOR CHANGES

Table of major stock price changes including Abacus Recruit, Irish Court, General Ind, etc.

LONDON FINANCIAL FUTURES

Table of London financial futures including Long Gilt, German Gov Bond, Italian Gov Bond, etc.

MONEY RATES (%)

Table of money rates for various currencies and terms.

EUROPEAN MONEY DEPOSITS (%)

Table of European money deposits for various currencies and terms.

GOLD/PRECIOUS METALS (Baird & Co)

Table of gold and precious metal prices.

STERLING SPOT AND FORWARD RATES

Table of sterling spot and forward rates for various currencies.

CAMPUS Chinese chequers

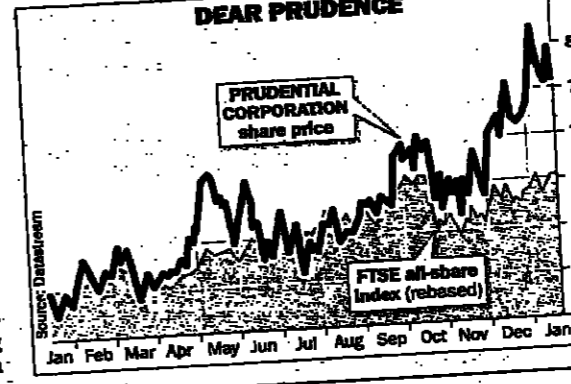
THERE is absolutely nothing remarkable in the fact that the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region is going to get competition in external telephone services from the beginning of next year. But given the remarkable if they had not. But given the exaggerated fears stirred up before the official handover of the colony to China last year, it is worth noting how thoroughly orderly and ordinary yesterday's agreement to surrender Hongkong Telecom's exclusive international telecom licence amount of time turned out to be.

The deal includes £532 million in cash, a timetable to phase out subsidised line rentals, plus the obvious end of royalty payments on the exclusive licence. Given that it would have been unthinkable for the terms of a "colonial" licence to hold up competition in international telecoms to and from Hong Kong for another eight years, the deal C&W has achieved does indeed seem reasonable. The City agreed and C&W's share price rose 7.5p to close at 508.5p after the news of the signing.

Prudential

INSTEAD of dampening demand for its shares, as would be expected, the run of bad news from Prudential Corporation has done little to affect the stock's upward run. This time last year the shares were hovering around 550p, but since December they have been on a roll, touching a record high of 820p at the start of this month.

though prices look frothy, in case they sell just before a multi-billion-pound deal. The City was particularly disappointed yesterday that sales in the US had slowed down after nearly two years' strong growth, and concerned about how turmoil in the Far East will affect business going forward. Also, UK sales are unlikely to be as strong in the first two quarters of 1998 as in 1997. With volumes likely to be lower in all markets this year, life insurers will need to keep tight control on costs. The launch of Direct Line's new pension today is a further reminder of the competition that traditional providers face. Holding Prudential shares in hope of a bid is for the brave.



DEAR PRUDENCE

Ushers

USHERS of Trowbridge came to the market at 110p last March. Since then its shares have dived by a third and investors have largely stayed away. Roger North, chief executive, is clearly incensed and his decision to add to his holding yesterday is an admirable gesture of faith. He says he cannot understand why people are ignoring the fundamentals: low gearing, interest cover at six times, an 18 per cent return on net assets, and strong organic growth.

Somerfield

AFTER 18 months of being derided as a ragbag of second-rate retail markets, Somerfield seems to be finding some fans in the City. Its shares, which had to be reduced in price twice to get the float away in 1996, have gained some 20 per cent in the past two months. Sadly for the company this is almost entirely the work of takeover speculation. The Safeway/Asda merger talks demonstrated a sector teeming with consolidation temptations - and as the fifth largest player, Somerfield is justifiably being seen as a natural target. So why do the shares still languish at 8.5

COMMODITIES

Table of commodity prices including COCOA, SOYABEAN COFFEE, WHITE SUGAR, MEAT & LIVESTOCK COMMISSION.

GNL LONDON GRAIN FUTURES

Table of GNL London grain futures including WHEAT, RYE, BARLEY, POTATO, RUBBER, LIFTS, BIFFEX.

LONDON METAL EXCHANGE

Table of London metal exchange prices including Gold, Silver, Platinum, Palladium.

DOLLAR RATES

Table of dollar rates for various countries including Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Hong Kong, Italy, Japan, etc.

OTHER STERLING

Table of other sterling rates for various currencies including Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, etc.

FTSE VOLUMES

Table of FTSE volumes for various companies including AMV, Anglo, BOC, etc.

Large advertisement on the right side of the page, partially visible, featuring the text 'Ba' and 'chen'.

Bank with colourful past on the market

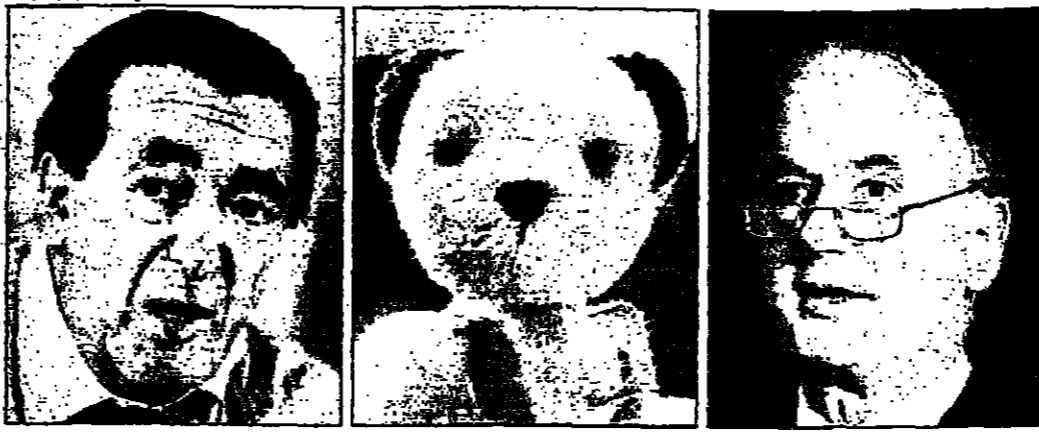
Any prospective buyer thinking of taking Guinness Mahon off the hands of the Bank of Yokohama might reflect on a story told by a former director of the merchant bank. Until quite recently, the old members of the accepting houses committee used to have quaint things called inner reserves, a secret fund replenished from the annual profits which was never disclosed to shareholders. On joining the board of Guinness Mahon in the 1980s, this director thought it might be nice to find out what was in the bank's inner reserve. Imagine his shock when he found the piggy bank was empty. Guinness Mahon had no inner reserves.

The decision by Yokohama to sell, nearly a decade after it bought a controlling stake for £68 million and seven years after it had to plough in a further £50 million to keep the bank afloat, opens a new chapter in the history of one of the most colourful of City institutions. This included a cast of characters stretching from Lord Kissin, the Labour peer who once chaired the bank, to Sooty, the puppet that is partly owned by it, from Sir Alastair Morton, the saviour of Eurotunnel who presided

over some of the merchant bank's stickier moments, to Ted Ball, the Landhurst Leasing boss recently convicted of a fraud on it, from Alan Hawkins, the New Zealand financier whose Equiticorp empire collapsed after purchasing a 61 per cent stake in the bank, to Robert Maxwell, whose empire collapsed after he sold his 14.7 per cent stake in Guinness Mahon.

The bank traces its history back to 1836. While never a powerhouse like NM Rothschild or Baring Brothers, it had always enjoyed a good, if rather staid, reputation. This changed in 1972 when Harry Kissin, the energetic East European emigré merged the bank with his Lewis & Peat group to form a financial conglomerate, Guinness Peat, stretching across banking, insurance, stockbroking and leasing.

While various parts of the group did well — Guinness Peat Aviation, the aircraft lessor, was highly profitable until it was highly; Guinness Flight, the fund manager, was started from



Robert Maxwell, Sooty and Sir Alastair Morton have all had links with Guinness Mahon

scratch and the group's stake is now worth more than £50 million — the bank suffered. The Guinness Peat group ran into losses in the early 1980s and though it appeared to stabilise itself while the City enjoyed a corporate finance boom, it never rose above the second division among deal makers. In 1986 the group at-

tempted, unsuccessfully, to take over Britannia Arrow, the fund manager now called Amvescap which now has a market value of £2.8 billion. A year later it was on the wrong end of its own unwanted bid.

Equiticorp, a brash New Zealand outfit, bid £338 million for Guinness Peat. Alastair Morton,

as chairman, tried to fend the antipodeans off, protesting to the Bank of England that they were not fit and proper owners of a merchant bank. He was vindicated when a dozen senior executive of Equiticorp, including Alan Hawkins, the chairman, were charged with fraud some years later. But this did not save the

bank, which briefly came under Equiticorp's control before the New Zealand group collapsed. Eventually, after much toiling a frothing, Guinness Mahon emerged from the mess as a quoted company with its own controlling shareholder, the Bank of Yokohama.

Why a regional Japanese bank wanted to own Guinness Mahon vexed many in the City. It must have vexed many more in Yokohama when the merchant bank nearly collapsed two years after the Japanese took control. Guinness Mahon had made a series of injudicious loans, mainly to property companies, but most publicly to Landhurst Leasing, the corrupt finance group that specialised in sports cars. The merchant bank's management asked Arthur Andersen to investigate. The accountants found a web of deceit with new leases written to cover up old ones where the payments could not be made. Landhurst collapsed with a deficit of more than £80 million, and its two principals — Ted Ball and David Ashworth —

were convicted of fraud. To sort out the mess, Bank of Yokohama took Guinness Mahon private and injected what is believed to have been £150 million to shore up the balance sheet.

Geoffrey Bell, the former World Bank adviser who took over as chairman in the late-1980s, brought in David Potter as chief executive. He set about building on the bank's strengths it had, for example, always had a renowned film finance unit, so it developed a media corporate finance unit; it owned Henderson Crowhite, the broker with an expertise in smaller companies, so it built its smaller company advisory unit. City figures who had fallen from favour, such as Christopher Stainforth, who resigned from UBS over the Blue Arrow affair, and Charles Hue Williams, who ran the market-making side of Kleinwort Benson when it lost £30 million on Premier Oil shares, were given a new home and a new lease of life. Profits have doubled in the past five years. Guinness Mahon appears to have shaken off its accident-prone history and might even have a solid future.

JASON NISSÉ

The chemistry that has drawn two drugs giants together

SB would be the dominant partner in a marriage with AHP, says Paul Durman

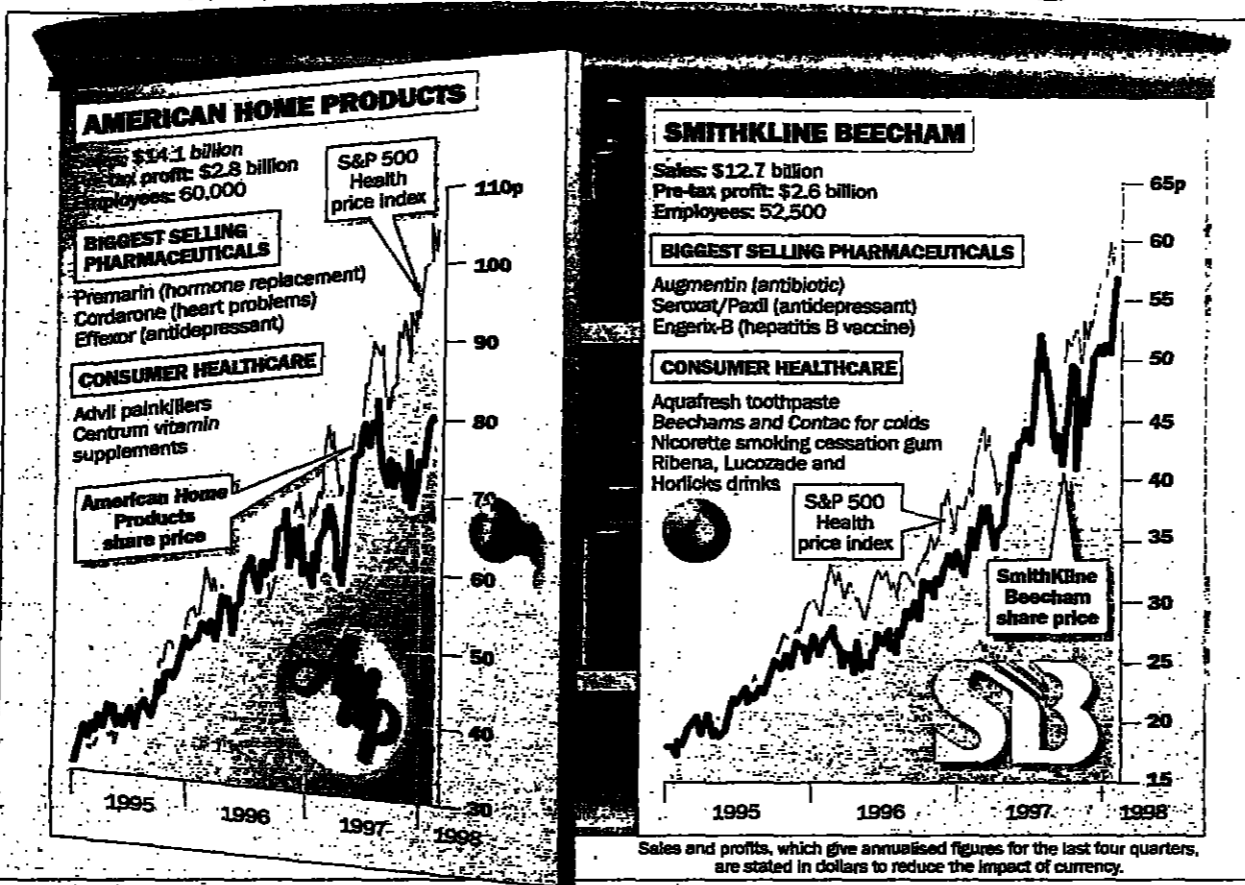
SmithKline Beecham's proposed merger with American Home Products shows just how narrow the gap between success and failure is in today's pharmaceutical industry.

By any measure, the two companies are both enormously powerful and profitable enterprises. They have both delivered enormous returns to their shareholders over the past few years as the supposed threat of Hillary Clinton's proposed healthcare reforms turned out to be a damp squib. And both have strong portfolios of recently and soon to be launched products that offer further promise for the future.

But AHP has suffered a few mishaps that have suddenly left it looking vulnerable. And Jan Leschly, the fiercely competitive former tennis star who is SmithKline Beecham's chief executive, now seems ready to seize the opportunity presented by AHP's misfortune.

Less than a year ago, he was insisting he was not interested in mergers with an American rival, Mr Leschly, a veteran of the deal that created Bristol-Myers Squibb, has privately said he does not want to go through the trauma of another merger.

The most serious of AHP's problems, at least financially, is the potential cost of settling the liability claims it faces from users of its weight loss drugs, Redux and Ponderin. New research last year suggested that these and other similar drugs are responsible for damaging the heart valves of perhaps a third of those taking them. Although the scale of the problem is far from clear, patients are already suing for damages. Estimates of AHP's eventual liability range as high as \$10 billion.



AHP could afford to meet such an enormous bill but the scare put an end to its previously relentless rise in its stock price. Wyeth-Ayerst, AHP's ethical pharmaceutical division, was forced to withdraw its anti-obesity drugs last September. Sales of Redux, which was only launched in July 1996, had been expected to grow to more than \$1 billion (about £500 million) a year.

Another possible catalyst for the talks with SmithKline Beecham was the news that John Stafford, who manages to be not only AHP's chairman but also its president and chief executive officer, was suffering from prostate cancer.

AHP says Mr Stafford has returned to work full-time after a "completely successful" operation. Nonetheless, the episode focused attention on the succession issue. One potential replacement was Fred Hassan, but he left AHP last year to take control of Pharmacia & Upjohn.

SmithKline Beecham and AHP are similar in size. But if

the deal goes ahead, it is the British-based company that is expected to call the shots. The strongly growing sales of its newer products have given it an excellent reputation among most investors and analysts, though not for any false modesty. "They're an egotistical bunch," one analyst said. "I think they want to conquer the world."

Both companies have strong vaccine and consumer healthcare businesses, which may lead to competition objections. SB's Serostat/Paxil may be regarded as too close a competitor to AHP's antidepressant, Effexor. And AHP has a similar product to Tagamet, the ulcer drug that was once SB's biggest seller. But with the possibility of divestments, none of these problems are regarded as insurmountable.

The same is true of the threat from compensating users of Ponderin and Redux. Peter Laing, pharmaceutical analyst at Société Générale Strauss Turnbull, said: "SmithKline Beecham would

not have broken cover if it thought that was a deal breaker. Either they have decided it's not enough of an issue to be worth worrying about, or they think they can ring-fence it."

Yesterday's announcements were preceded by strong rises in both companies' share prices, pushing SB's market value up to £41 billion, while AHP is worth about £35 billion.

The suitors cautioned that there cannot be any assurance that the talks will lead to a deal. However, given the industry's habitual reticence, the admission of talks was taken as evidence that SmithKline Beecham and AHP have already made good progress towards an agreement.

Neither company was prepared to go beyond their formal statements to explain the logic they see in a merger. However, the potential savings are large. Mr Laing said the rule of thumb is that combined operating expenses could be cut by 10 per cent over

three years. That could be worth up to £1.5 billion a year, which would provide a significant boost to group profit margins that already stand at more than 20 per cent.

Much of the saving would come from rationalising sales, marketing and distribution networks. The addition of AHP's portfolio of drugs would give SB a better chance of making money out of Diversified Pharmaceutical Services, the distribution business bought a few years ago that has yet to convince the company's followers.

AHP would also strengthen SmithKline Beecham's range of cardiovascular treatments, currently seen as a weakness in its portfolio.

In the world league for prescription pharmaceuticals, SmithKline Beecham and AHP stand in eighth and ninth places. Combining them would create the world's largest drug company, overtaking Merck of the US. Glaxo Wellcome stood in third spot in 1996, though it may have

slipped since sales of Zantac collapsed after the ulcer drug lost its US patent protection last year.

The large pharmaceutical companies are true global businesses, but it is a fragmented industry. Even Merck has only a 6 per cent share. It is this that has prompted endless takeover rumours in the sector.

Drug companies like to talk of the new medicines they are developing to meet the growing needs of the ageing populations of the developed economies. The healthcare industry does have excellent growth prospects. But it is questionable if the pharmaceutical companies can sustain their recent rate of returns to shareholders purely from the discovery and development of new products.

A recent analysis from Andersen Consulting found that by the year 2000, pharmaceutical companies are expected to halve the length of the drug discovery process while tripling the number of products they take on to the development stage. Many big-selling drugs will lose their patent protection over the next few years, requiring the industry to come up with new blockbuster. Andersen suggested that the top ten companies will have to launch five new chemical entities each year just to keep pace with an industry growth rate of 10 per cent.

SB's recent product launches have done well, but the Andersen figures suggest it will require a step change in the productivity of the research and development process. It is this that is causing the industry leaders to turn their attention to more mundane matters than drug development, such as cost cutting through mergers and acquisitions and more efficient management of supply chains.

It is such considerations that have made Zeneca, the smallest of Britain's international drug groups, a constant target for takeover speculation. With an acknowledged "gap" in its product development pipeline in four years' time, it is easy for investment bankers to make a case for a deal.

Such speculation will continue whether or not the SmithKline Beecham/AHP talks proceed to a deal.

Action Man may swoop to the rescue of Bluebird

The toy industry is alive with speculation that Action Man could soon come to the rescue of Polly Pocket. Ms Pocket is fighting off the affections of Sir Ron Brierley, who on Monday made a £42 million offer for Bluebird, the company which makes her.

The offer was made through Guinness Peat Group, the New Zealand-born entrepreneur's investment company. Bluebird's management, which includes Chris Burgin as chief executive, says the offer is opportunistic and undervalues the company.

But Bluebird could yet be saved from the clutches of Sir Ron by Hasbro, the maker of Action Man dolls, and the world's second largest toy company. Hasbro, which yesterday refused to rule out a bid, holds nearly 7 per cent of Bluebird's shares.

The custody battle for Ms Pocket is the latest chapter in a rather sorry tale for the British toy industry — or what little is left of it. Sales of toys in Britain were worth only £1.7 billion in 1996, according to NPD, the market research company. Preliminary data shows that sales grew by only 1.7 per cent last year — well below the rate of inflation.

Toy manufacturing in Britain, like car manufacturing, used to be thriving. Monopoly and Subbuteo were made by Waddington, Scrabble by Spears and Scalextric by Hornby alongside its famous model railways.

The change in the industry began across the Atlantic in the early 1980s when Hasbro, then a private company worth only about £44 million, hit the jackpot with its My Little Pony and Transformers toys. Industry analysts say that, for a short time in the 1980s, Hasbro became the only company in history to manufacture the most popular toys for both boys and girls at the same time.

Hasbro, now worth more than £1.9 billion, used its success to go on a buying spree — to take on Mattel, its US arch-rival, and the world's biggest toy manufacturer.

"It's very difficult for a toy company to grow organically," says Mr Burgin. "The only way to get through the kind of tit-for-tat battles we have seen from Hasbro and Mattel. The industry is all about new and exciting toys, and depends heavily on the movie industry and television animation."

Mattel, worth about £3.1 billion, makes the world's most enduring and popular toy, the Barbie doll. Hasbro learnt the hard way, with its ill-conceived Sindy doll, that the leggy blonde is here to stay.

The battle for acquisitions between Hasbro and Mattel forced both companies to look to Britain, where the toy industry was suffering a cyclical decline. Businesses looked vulnerable and cheap. In 1995, Hasbro snapped up Waddington for £50 million, and two years later shut down its British operations in Leeds and Kent. At about the same time Mattel swallowed up Spears.

A bid for Bluebird from Hasbro would be a mixed blessing. The company's founder, Torquill Norman, who retired and sold his shares in 1996, would perhaps not want to see his company sold to a US competitor. Meanwhile, the British toy industry would see one more traditional name disappear abroad, leaving it with only Hornby, Games Workshop, Character Group and a handful of tiny electronics games companies.

However, shareholders and analysts realise that Sir Ron's 101p per share bid is at a rock bottom price. They could be forgiven for thinking that he is using the bid simply to flush out other potential bidders so that he can make a speedy exit from a disappointing investment.

Mr Burgin could not comment on any speculation, but believes that the company's problems are short term and typical of the toy industry.

"It's a very fickle business," he says. "And if you have a massive success in the future you have to replace that with something else. Polly Pocket is at least still alive and reasonably well."



Action Man: saviour?

Ticket to ride

PROBABLY the least enviable job on wheels must be the chairmanship of Virgin Rail, Britain's worst train operator — official. (This is not our grapes, as I have never been on it; the worst coast line to Scotland has the worst punctuality record in Western Europe). So why on earth should Phil Cox, finance director of Asda, who must have better things to do, what with the on-off merger talks with Safeway, want to become the first outside chairman the business has had? This is the sort of job that can

lead to physical confrontations in the street should your face become well enough known. "I just think it will be very interesting," says Cox, apparently a master of understatement. "If I just wanted any non-executive directorship, this isn't the one I would have picked. They are coming from a long way behind — the rolling stock is the oldest of any of the operators. It will be three to five years before any new trains can be purchased."

By which stage Virgin Rail will have been floated, I assume, because Cox has the sort of experience that would appeal to the City, having helped to bring Allied Carpets and MFI to the market. But interesting is the word. For one of the directors of Railtrack is Archie Norman, who when he is not being something terribly important in the Tory party is chairman of Asda, and Cox's boss. And Railtrack and Virgin Rail are at war over the poor service. Truly a bed of nails.

□ I AM sent an intriguing change of address card. Killik & Co, the private client stockbroker, has relocated to "The Old Conveniences, Queen's Circus, Battersea." "It's actually a converted toilet," Killik tells me. "Unfortunately we had to keep the name." A bit, er, poky, surely? "It was quite a big public toilet."



"Sorry — we're clean out of champagne."



Six hitters

A HUGE English cricketing victory Down Under. We murdered the Australians, six wickets, two draws and just two defeats. The locals never knew what hit them. The team, alas, was the Stock Exchange's own, just returned after a three-week tour. Any tips from captain Andrew Miller, who sells equities derivatives at Merrill Lynch, for Atherton and his boys, who head off on their own via dolorosa to Australia next winter? "I don't think they quite know what to expect," says Miller. "It's a bit difficult to know how good or bad a side like that is going to be. In Sydney we could have beaten them with our eyes

closed. By the time we got to Perth they were rather more competitive."

Sunday who?

AS THE relaunched Sunday Business heads for the streets in a few weeks time, a final humiliation for the old one, which went bust after an odd crew of backers tried to rescue it. Two High Court judges have cleared the paper of contempt of court, despite a series of stories shortly before the trial of Bruce Grobbelaar and others a year ago. The paper would have been dead in the water under the law as it stands, and the Attorney General wanted full sentences. But the judges found that the paper's circulation was so pitiful that it was unlikely any juror would have read it.

□ THE decision to reform the Channel Islands money racket looks long overdue. Ring the Financial Services Department of the State of Jersey and all you get is this single despairing recorded message: "If you are interested in the job vacancy, please leave your name after the tone."

Breare fox

A RATHER more expansive career beckons, then, for Robert Breare, chief executive of Arcadian International, after yesterday's purchase by Patriot American Hospitality, the rather dull but very rich US real estate invest-

ment trust. Breare — Emn, president of the Cambridge Student Union and a contestant in the 1976 boat race — has one of those CVs thereafter that, for a lesser man, might have ended in disaster — various property and leisure interests at the tail end of the 1980s, something of a graveyard for entrepreneurs at the time. I had always thought of the bulky and amiable Breare, whose scuffling days must long be over, if I might delicately put it thus, as more of a dealer than a developer. Perhaps his retention by Patriot suggests that the big hotel deal the Americans are interested in might now be a little closer.

MARTIN WALLER



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مركز من لامل

Main table containing unit trust prices for various funds, including columns for fund names, prices, and changes. The table is organized into multiple columns and rows, listing numerous different investment funds.

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Vertical text on the right edge of the page, likely containing publication details or contact information.

Equities lose early lead

TRADING PERIOD: Settlement takes place five business days after the day of trade. Changes are calculated on the previous day's close, but adjustments are made when a stock is ex-dividend. Changes, yields and price/earnings ratios are based on middle prices.

1997E	High	Low	Company	Price	% Chg	P/E
1997E	10.50	10.00	ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES			
1997E	10.50	10.00	ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES			

1997E	High	Low	Company	Price	% Chg	P/E
1997E	10.50	10.00	BANKS			
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1997E	High	Low	Company	Price	% Chg	P/E
1997E	10.50	10.00	BREWERIES, PUBS & REST			
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Law Report January 21 1998 Court of Appeal

Planning controls do not apply to short term free accommodation

Regina v Kensington and Chelsea London Borough Council, Ex parte Lawrie Plantation Services Ltd

Before Lord Justice Nourse, Lord Justice Pill and Lord Justice Thorpe

January 14

Powers conferred on London planning authorities for controlling the change of use of permanent residential accommodation to temporary lettings/company flats did not apply to flats acquired by a company and used to provide free short-term accommodation for its employees.

Such use was not provided for by a "consideration arising... by reason of the employment" within the meaning of section 252(a) of the Greater London Council (General Powers) Act 1973, so that there was no material change of use for the purposes of section 55(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

The Court of Appeal so held dismissing an appeal in proceedings for judicial review by Kensington and Chelsea London Borough Council from the order of Mr Robin Purchas, QC, sitting as a deputy High Court judge on February 28, 1997, quashing two breach of condition notices in respect of flats at 12 Elystan Street, Chelsea, London, owned by the

company, Lawrie Plantation Services Ltd.

The condition, the subject of the notices, was imposed by a planning permission for conversion of the flats in 1987 and required that the premises be not used for any purpose specified in section 25 of the 1973 Act.

Section 25 of that Act, as amended by section 4 of the Greater London Council (General Powers) Act 1983, provides that "the use as temporary sleeping accommodation of any residential premises in Greater London involves a material change in use..."

Section 252(a) defines "temporary sleeping accommodation" as "sleeping accommodation which is occupied by the same person for less than ninety consecutive nights and which is provided (with or without other services) for a consideration arising either - (i) by way of trade for money or money's worth; or (ii) by reason of the employment of the occupant."

Mr Mark Lowe, QC, for the council; Mr Alan Alesbury for the company.

LORD JUSTICE NOURSE said that the company had extensive overseas interests including tea plantations in India, and used the flats mainly to provide short-term accommodation for its senior

employees. The majority were from overseas, coming to London on holiday and invited by the company to stay at the flats. They paid nothing for the accommodation.

The judge concluded as an inference that the object was for the benefit of the company in fostering goodwill and, no doubt, better performance on the part of its employees.

How did section 252(a) stand in relation to the facts? The wording of the provision was eccentric and its effect unprincipled. Thus before

a case could fall within limb (i) of paragraph (a) the provider of the accommodation had to provide it by way of trade. If there was no trade, limb (i) did not apply, even though the provision of the accommodation might be equally objectionable on planning grounds.

Turning to limb (ii), Mr Lowe was right in suggesting that the words "by reason of the employment of the occupant" had been taken from provisions of the income tax legislation concerning benefits in kind provided by an employer as part of the employee's

emoluments. In that context the words were appropriate and entirely comprehensible.

Their collocation with the words "a consideration arising" had caused a difficulty of interpretation which was central to the present case.

What then was meant by "a consideration arising... by reason of the employment of the occupant"? It meant that the provider of the accommodation had to receive a consideration from the occupant for providing it: the employment should be a cause of the occupant's

furnishing the provider of the accommodation with some consideration in exchange.

That consideration could take one of three forms: a payment in cash, a deduction from the occupant's wages, or the performance of services by him. It was only the third which could be relied on here.

Mr Lowe's submission was that the better performance on the part of employees which flowed from the goodwill fostered by the provision of the accommodation was a benefit accruing to the company.

The judge, rejecting that submission, held that there was really nothing which could be called consideration in its correct legal sense.

Mr Alesbury accepted that it had been established that it was a term of an employee's contract that he should be entitled to make a visit to one of the flats or even that he should be considered for an invitation to make such a visit, then the necessary consideration would have been made out.

However, on the evidence as it stood, and the court could, with

hindsight have wished that it had been fuller, the most that could properly be inferred was that employees would have had an expectation that they would be considered for an invitation to make a visit. On that footing no consideration within section 252(a) had been established.

Lord Justice Pill and Lord Justice Thorpe gave concurring judgments.

Solicitors: Mr A. G. Phillips, Kensington; Travers Smith Braithwaite.

Noise just above WHO level not an actionable nuisance

Murdoch and Another v Glacier Metal Co Ltd

Before Lord Justice Nourse, Lord Justice Pill and Lord Justice Thorpe

January 19

Night time factory noise that was marginally greater than the World Health Organisation's recommended level above which the restorative value of sleep could be affected, did not constitute an actionable nuisance to a family living close by when all the surrounding circumstances were taken into account.

The Court of Appeal so held dismissing an appeal by the plain-

tiffs, Mrs Ann Murdoch and Mr Duncan Murdoch, from the dismissal by Mr Recorder Trethowan in Yeovil County Court on September 21, 1996 of their action against the defendants, Glacier Metal Co Ltd.

Mr Peter Wadley for the plaintiffs; Mr Roger Eastman for the defendants.

LORD JUSTICE PILL said that claimant sought an injunction to restrain the defendants' factory at Winterhay, Ilminster, that was close to the property where the plaintiffs had lived since 1988. The plaintiffs also owned 2.6 acres of land on which they had

planning permission for six houses. The A303 Ilminster bypass ran at no great distance from their house.

The noise, of a fluctuating nature, was described by Mrs Murdoch as a low droning noise from which they could not escape.

The judge in concluding that the noise did not constitute an actionable nuisance had applied the correct test, namely whether according to the standards of the average person and taking into account the character of the neighbourhood, the noise was sufficiently serious to constitute a nuisance. See *Walter v Selfe* (1851)

4 De G & S 315 and *Sturges v Bridgman* (1879) 11 ChD 852.

The plaintiffs, the judge found, were genuine people whose lives had been affected. Expert evidence given in the proceedings had been called by both parties.

Reference was made to the World Health Organisation report *Environmental Health Criteria 12: Noise* published in 1980 which stated: "Studies have indicated that the disturbance of sleep becomes increasingly apparent as ambient noise levels exceed about 35 dBA."

The judge, having stated that the WHO report was the evidence that had most assisted him, concluded

that the evidence showed that the agreed measurement of the noise level at night in the plaintiffs' house was the same, or marginally above, the WHO recommended level.

Mr Wadley submitted that the judge had misunderstood the effect of that recommendation and the report's emphasis on the importance of undisturbed sleep to human life.

He relied on the expert evidence of noise readings taken at night in the house with the windows open and on the adverse effect of fluctuating noise on sleep.

Sleep was a matter of importance but there was no propo-

sition of law that there was a common law nuisance if sleep in a house in an area such as that in the present case was disturbed. Other considerations had to be borne in mind.

The judge was entitled to take into account the overall situation, including the proximity of the bypass and the paucity of complaints from others living nearby. He was entitled to reach his conclusion and dismiss the action.

Lord Justice Thorpe gave a concurring judgment and Lord Justice Nourse agreed.

Solicitors: Stephens & Scown, Exeter; Penningtons.

Chartered Institute of Taxation Associateship exams, November 1997

The Chartered Institute of Taxation

Successful Candidates in the Associateship Examination held in November 1997

Awards

The Institute Medal for the best overall performance Alison Singh (MacIntyre Hudson, Bedford)

The Ian Walker Medal for the best overall performance in the paper on Tax Administration, Professional Responsibilities and Ethics William Francis Wycherley (Deloitte & Touche, Liverpool)

The Spofforth Medal for the paper on Personal Tax and Trust Taxation Sean David Lavery (BDO Stoy Hayward, Belfast)

The John Wood Medal for the paper on Business Taxation Antony Clive Parsell (Industrial Control Services Group plc, Maldon)

The Avery Jones Medal for the paper on Practical Implications, Interaction and Tax Planning Jeannette Rooth (Ernst & Young, Bristol)

The Butterworth Prize for the highest total marks Alison Singh (MacIntyre Hudson, Bedford)

Distinctions Alison Singh (MacIntyre Hudson, Bedford); William Francis Wycherley (Deloitte & Touche, Liverpool)

Pricewinner - Distinction

Abel S H (Leicester); Abrahams M B (Sheffield); Ackers J J (Ormskirk); Addy R L (Macclesfield); Aistrup K J (London); Apdin D C (Henley-On-Thames); Arnold J A (London); Atkinson J F (St Clement, Jersey)

Bailey A (Edinburgh); Bailey J B (Newbury); Bamforth A L (Huddersfield); Bayley L A (Warrington); Beary J H (Street); Besumant C L (Stockport); Beedell V (Richmond); Bell G F (Glasgow); Bell N J (Nuneaton); Bell R C (Bristol); Bettley L (Coventry); Birrell J J (Aberdeen); Bishop J G (Southampton); Blake E M (Ashford); Boney G R (Stockton-on-Tees); Bottomley N D (Hullfax); Box J A (Nottingham); Bradley R L (Huddersfield); Bray P R (Bristol); Breen A K (Salford); Broome J V (Liverpool); Brown F J (Craigavon); Brown M (Bromley); Bull M H (Selby); Butler S L (Beckenham)

Cammack M R (Cardiff); Campbell A G (Reading); Carrington G D (Warrington); Carter P V (Amstelveen); Chadburn K S (Birmingham); Chaplin S D (Walsby); Cheng J W (New Malden); Coates S R (Nottingham); Cockledge L M (Cardiff); Cook J M (Wimborne); Corbett N (Manchester); Couper D J (Stockport); Critchton P C (Dundee); Crier J A (London)

Davidge J A (Preston); Davies M C (St Sampson, Guernsey); Dobson W N (London); Dumble A K (London); Dunford J J (Waterloo); Dunn C W L (London); Dymock N L (Bristol); Dyson J D (Radlett)

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Bursting forth: Dagmar Pecková and Nuccia Focile

Bored by airs on a shoestring

SALTY stories about Lillian Baylis, sainted creatrix of our national theatre and opera companies, are legion. One of the less kind tells of how she went round to the dressing-room of a young understudy who had just gone on as Violetta in a matinee of *La traviata* at the Old Vic. "Well dear," she said briskly, "you've had your chance, and you've missed it." Unkind, and so is its application here, explained if not justified by the second text for today's sermon, taken from an advertisement for I cannot now recall what:

"You're never too old for a new experience." Well, I am a great deal too old for the unpleasing experience of witnessing something I always believed to be impossible: that Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* can be thunderously boring.

Patrick Mason has held the post of staff producer honourably *in extenso* for the Royal Opera among others, and it is tragic that he should have muffed his first major production with a major company. Maybe it is not altogether his fault. The budget was plainly minimal, but that elegant designer Roger Butlin has responded with corresponding austerity for his permanent set serving four locations: a few suspended flats drawn hither and thither, barely any props, furniture, doors or windows. The costumes are in interesting shades of black, white and grey. The show doesn't look a hundred dollars, let alone a million.

But Young must shoulder the blame for there being barely a ripple of laughter all evening, even at such fall-safe efforts as the discovery of Cherubino in the chair. Occasionally the surdides

elicited a giggle, often before the joke had been delivered on stage, and the only time my thin lips twitched towards a smile was when Susanna rather than Cherubino emerged from the closet — one of the great moments of *word theatre* — and not a flicker of expression crossed the face of Dmitri Hvorostovsky's Count. Had no one explained the plot to him? By and large the singers addressed themselves, not the audience, yet even so failed to react to each other, sang their arias rooted to the spot, and had been discouraged from displaying any dramatic animation.

Whether Young or the conductor Steven Sloane was responsible for the leaden delivery of the recitative I know not, but Sloane's amiably plodding tempos and ironing out of the music's wit, tenderness and pain came as a big surprise after his white-hot *Iphigénie* in Cardiff last year.

The soloists should not be judged in these surroundings, but I liked Gillian Webster's spirited Countess, and admired the way Nuccia Focile's Susanna tried to burst out of the staging's confines (Webster being slightly insecure at the top, they should have swapped lines in the second-act trio). Hvorostovsky sang beautifully; his impassivity was unfortunately matched by Neal Davies's phlegmatic duffer of a Figaro. It was a mistake to give Dagmar Pecková's fruity-toned but feminine Cherubino a vestigial moustache — she looked decidedly peculiar. A sad, sad evening in the annals of the Royal Opera.

RODNEY MILNES

Bafta is shaking off its dusty, clubby image and going interactive. Daniel Rosenthal meets the woman responsible

And the CD-Rom winner is...

A hush falls over the assembled nominees as the presenter tears open a gilded envelope and announces: The Bafta award for Best Interactive Computer Game goes to...

It sounds improbable: the organisation best-known for glitzy ceremonies suddenly deciding to present its world-famous bronze masks to software whizzkids as well as tuxedoed film stars. Yet at its Piccadilly headquarters on Friday Bafta launches not only its inaugural Interactive Entertainment Awards, but also a website. Such initiatives, promises Jane Clarke, the academy's new chief executive, will be the first of numerous jobs to what one senior Bafta figure calls "our unfair public image as an old stagers' film club".

"It may surprise people that we are embracing new media," says Clarke, who took office on January 1 after two years as deputy director of the British Film Institute (BFI). "But we want the awards to demonstrate that you can approach interactive along similar lines to cinema and TV. You can talk about best editing and best script for a CD-Rom just as for a feature film."

The awards, to be presented in October, are "an excellent opportunity for Bafta to reach out to younger people". In theory, at least, the teenagers and twentysomethings who are left underwhelmed when, as happened last year, the academy awards a fellowship to Julie Christie, ought to take note when it recognises the excellence of the graphics on the *Men In Black* CD-Rom.

The same principle applies to the website, which will include information on the history of the film and television awards, which, in another new development, will this year be presented at separate ceremonies in April and May. Once links to other film and television pages are established, the site ought to attract the attention of net-surfers who would not otherwise give Bafta a second thought.

None of this should suggest that Clarke has in mind a "people's academy", throwing open the doors to a BFI-style lay membership. Bafta will remain first and foremost an industry body whose admission criterion is a minimum of three to five years' professional achievement in film and television. Nonetheless, Clarke likes the idea of a "new Bafta" whose unofficial slogan might be "If you can't join, you can join in".

The most significant element in an outreach policy



All welcome at the masked ball: Jane Clarke and one of the Bafta awards, now available to software whizzkids

which, she stresses, "is backed by the entire Bafta council, not just me", is the decision to introduce Audience Awards for best film and best television programme of 1997.

"We have more than 50 awards in all, and these will be the only two not in the gift of

the academy. We want thousands of people to vote through link-ups with newspapers, cinema chains and a television phone-in. It should give the television audience for the ceremonies some sense of ownership. If awards broadcasts are well received

they can stimulate pride and interest in British film and television — which is good for Bafta members."

On a smaller scale, Clarke wants more people to realise that, although members have booking priority, Bafta's year-round events programme is

open to the public. At 195 Piccadilly this evening, for example, £5 will buy you a seat for "Never Let The Beasts Spoil A Good Story", a panel discussion focusing on the sometimes thin line between reportage and fiction.

In May James Ferman, the

director of the British Board of Film Classification, will visit Bafta to reflect on "Scenes I Have Cut". His talk, says Clarke, is a good example of the academy highlighting an issue on which industry and consumer concerns overlap. Film classification is massively important for producers who may be desperate, for example, for a "family film" to get a PG rather than a 12, while parents remain concerned over what images their children might see in a PG.

"We will have a full house for Ferman, but that's only 230 people. That's not a wide enough audience for such an important issue and I want to ensure it's picked up in the media. The public should see Bafta as an important forum for this kind of debate." Television is the ideal way to achieve that goal, and Clarke would love to secure TV coverage for the annual Bafta lecture (delivered last year by Alan Parker).

Clarke's CV has an appropriately eclectic look for the boss of an organisation whose membership ranges from the producers of high-brow documentaries to skilled technicians working on the most frivolous game shows.

After postgraduate research on "Hollywood women's melodrama" at the Slade School, she worked as a film journalist and cinema programmer. Then, as a features producer, she witnessed the turbulent birth of TV-am in 1982.

"The first three months were incredible," she recalls. "Eighty-hour weeks and people being stabbed in the back. So many staff left that if you were halfway sensible you were rapidly promoted." By 1985 she was working alongside Anne Diamond and Nick Owen as features editor of *Good Morning Britain*, and by 1992 had become controller of features for Westcountry Television, commissioning successes such as *Commando*, the 1994 documentary series on the Royal Marines.

"I loved producing, and the immediacy of television. I like having something tangible to show for my work, and what attracted me to the job at Bafta was the number of self-contained deadlines — awards ceremonies and other events — that come up as part of running an organisation with 25 full-time employees and 3,000 members."

"Although I studied film as a PhD, I've always been a pop culture fan. Within a year I hope the public will view Bafta in a different light."

Details of Bafta events can be obtained by calling 0171-734 0022

THEATRE: Drama comes up from the audience; Williams's classic as strong as ever; everyman heroes of the Holocaust; that's enough Godber potboilers

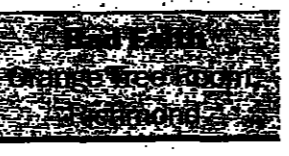
Virtual reality has its virtues

After Sam Walters's company moved from its first venue, upstairs at the Orange Tree pub, to its new premises across the road, the old L-shaped room was neglected for a while — at least by critics — until someone came up with the idea that a production there could reflect, contradict or otherwise connect with what was on show in the main house.

So, to complement Arthur Murphy's 18th-century farce *All In The Wrong*, continuing at the main house until the end of the month, we are given a commissioned work by David Lewis where, once again, somebody seems to be getting significant facts wrong. That's about the end of the parallels, however, for where Murphy sorts out the confusions and neatly giftwraps the love affairs, Lewis is content to leave much unsorted and the central love affair crumbling.

Added to which, the character of Helen (Heather Coombs) is rewriting the play as it goes along. At the risk of spoiling a good joke, the opening scene between mother and father (Patricia Garwood, Osmond Bullock), she fussing about cups of tea, he engaged in painting toy soldiers, is interrupted when he looks up from the *Imperial Guard* and peers in puzzlement into the audience. "Helen, is that you?" he says, and out from their seats reluctantly come the daughter and her boyfriend.

The expected invasion of genres follows, with the parents at first not appreciating that they are characters in the boyfriend's hunched-in embarrassment — "I can't believe you introduced me to your Dad in front of an audience" — before tumbling out of the play. In what follows, Lewis uses the prickly and suspicious



Helen to pick up on issues of mistrust and betrayal, including the risk that chronic mistrust can irritate other people into betrayal. Trusting an adulterous father comes into it, and trust in God; trust in oneself too, for Steve, the boyfriend, reappears (an attractively relaxed performance by Robert Jordan), keen to have sex but thwarted by Helen's range of doubts.

Directed by George Ormond, the cast manages the shifts in reality. Lewis gives them too many curtailed sentences and relies on exits to avoid confrontation, but he entertainingly builds up his storm-clouds of unknowing.

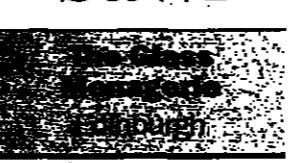
JEREMY KINGSTON

When Tennessee Williams scored his first hit with *The Glass Menagerie*, it was clearly the personal purging of a boy who had jumped ship from a dead-end destiny and reinvented himself as a Broadway-bound high roller and arch gay deceiver.

But in the first few seconds of the play at the Royal Lyceum, Williams's narrator/silver-age Tom issues a pointed disclaimer to such notions, lest his audience get the wrong idea about this new kid on the boulevard. Almost half a century on from its first outing, and in a time when the myth of self-destructive celebrity is less the stuff of dreams than the humdrum, none of this matters that much, except perhaps in the minds of Williams's archivists and earnest young men with literary aspirations.

Not that this is to belittle the fate of Williams's tragic sister, here carved into the frail figure of Laura, whose painful retreat into a world of glass animals looks set to end when Gentleman Jim, a longstanding, unrequited crush, comes calling. It's just that, however much fact and fiction blur into

Belles of the bawl



one another, the play has to exist on its own terms. And it does, quite beautifully. Of course, being blessed with some of the most tear-jerkingly tragic speeches set down on paper this century helps, as Big Mama Amanda scathingly her way through what's left of her half-life, her old-world gentility preserved like an antique vase in a St Louis shoebox, tucked away while the real world rages outside.

Polly Teale's new production sets the play clearly in Tom's head so, rather than the usual show and tell, we see Tom the after-hours scribbler,

drafting things magically into shape before our very eyes as he sets down a template of faded Southern Belles, little lost girls and flawed boys, trapped by circumstance but consumed with a hope destined to be crushed.

But Teale never overstates the case, so rather than a grotesque next best thing to a drag queen, Lois Baxter's Amanda is made flesh and blood, an aging coquette clinging on to the past. We see glimpses of latent sexuality too, as Monica Dolan's occasionally over-mannered Laura catches sight of her painted face in the mirror, an ugly duckling at last squaring up to the potential swan within.

Of course, Matthew Pidgeon's Jim, that all-American boy and symbol of aspiration, happiness and good fortune, puts paid to that. And if Alec Newman's glib-necked Tom keeps Laura's flame aloft, unable to exorcise her image, it's because he is living for them both, and for Amanda too. Which is the only way such hand-me-down emotional baggage can be dealt with. Turn it into genius and burn.

NEIL COOPER

The horror brought home

David Liben is dying in his New York hospital bed with all the grace of a Tarnworth pig. He rails against the injustice of death, medical science and Popist conspiracy theories. Suddenly he sits up in bed and says: "I got Bertolt Brecht's children out. They're living in California and they're doctors." With a shake of the hospital sheets, Liben's bedclothes are transformed into his shroud, and we are transported back to a Jewish ghetto in Berlin on the eve of war.

From that one bizarre claim and the discovery of an old passport, writer Shauna Kanter has fashioned an old-fashioned thriller about the rescue of a Jewish photojournalist, Vera Prager, and her two children from the jaws of the Holocaust. Taking their cue from the dead Liben's passport, the 22 young members of Voice Theatre Ensemble and two musicians turn Kanter's three-pronged story into a sweeping montage of soundbites and snapshots.

Under the spell of Mike Bartlett's clarinet and Sarah G. Tunnell's violin, the cast create scenes on the streets of prewar Berlin. Meanwhile, on a beach in America, Max Hogden's young David Liben wrestles with his ideals and the mad risk of travelling to Berlin to smuggle out a family he does not even know.

It's the personal stakes that Kanter puts under the microscope. The gambles Sarah Beckett's photographer, Prager, takes with her children by recording horrors such as *Kristallnacht*, and the sour arguments Liben and his pregnant wife wage over the price of his Jewish (and communist) convictions. Around the fringes of this debate, Robert Langdon Lloyd puts in a superior cameo as a fruitily Yiddish actor manager who refuses to believe that things are worse than they seem. Kanter's production is more

Legacy Cocktail

about the telling of a gripping tale than individual acting fireworks, and as much about educating as entertaining. The lesson is simple: we let wounds like these scab over at our peril. By the time we get to

the border crossing it matters not whether Liben is saving Brecht's children or not. The power of the piece lies in its motives. And, apart from Kanter's stagey moments of gratuitous manipulation, the motives are movingly, sometimes thrillingly, authentic.

JAMES CHRISTOPHER

Laugh? I thought I'd never start

Someone has to draw the short straw, which is how it falls to me to write something about the latest of John Godber's cringingly patronising glances at Yorkshire culture. Jeremy Kingston writes. Life can play rotten tricks, because I went to see the last one too, set on a health farm (*Gym and Tonic*), and that wasn't long after his *April in Paris* tried to persuade me that a peep into Notre Dame and a trot round the Louvre were the only things needed to set a blocked Yorkshire painter free to dance down the road to happy self-expression and fulfilment.

I liked *Bouncers*, I truly did, but that's a dozen years ago now. Once again we are in the company of a PhD, just like Godber, who teaches old drama at a Yorkshire school, as once did Godber, and who sprinkles his speech with references to Kafka, Balzac and Brecht, just as so many of Godber's characters so otiosely do. This one's name



is Martin, his Dad was a miner, his Mam is a moaner, and he has married above his station. Mother-in-law is an actress, father-in-law a QC, and they would not dream of holidaying in Benidorm, but Martin sees through them in the end. They don't laugh, you see, and without laughter what is this life, eh? Except for a flashback to the Tower Ballroom, Blackpool, and a flash forward to Benidorm, the play is set on the shores of Windermere. Here the sarcastic, guilty and self-critical Martin (Adrian Hood) has invited his angina-troubled, tablet-taking Dad (Dickie Astworth) and carping, arthritic, neurotic, miser-

able Mam (Judi Jones) for a glum weekend in the rain. Unbelievably he is writing a film script and his parents are said to be a good source of material.

On the Courtyard Theatre's dark set of three plain chairs, plus a hospital bed when it looks as though the world will soon be rid of Mam, Martin tells us about them, argues with them, accuses them of living limited, Balzac-less lives, but you know, he loves them. Hood stands with his shoulders hunched and his hands in his pockets, comparing the situation to Chekhov or Beckett — the nerve. His wife has turned him out of the family home and he's so ashamed and so lonely but the solution is not hard to find. He takes his young kids for a holiday in Benidorm. He doesn't care what his in-laws will think. And though in a way the place was awful, the kids had a lovely time, and everyone laughed and laughed. Though not me.

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Marcus Binney looks at the tricky political and aesthetic questions that will need to be tackled in Edinburgh

A design for a new parliament excites fierce passions. At Canberra the building of a permanent Australian legislature was delayed for 50 years because the Government chose a hill-top site that seemed to set parliament above the people. It took the ingenuity of an Italian, the architect Aldo Giurgola, to devise a solution to satisfy egalitarian Aussies: half-bury the chamber in the hill, so the people could, symbolically and literally, walk above their representatives.

Donald Dewar, the Scottish Secretary, has deftly chosen a site for the Scottish parliament at the foot of the Royal Mile. Rejecting the alternatives - Calton Hill, Leith or Haymarket - he has decided to put Scotland's assembly beside Holyroodhouse, where Robert the Bruce held a parliament in 1326. Now a competition has been announced to choose the architect for the £50 million project.

With Westminster going anti-pageantary, the opening of the Scottish Parliament could outshine London. That, too, would renew an ancient tradition. When the new parliament building opened in Edinburgh on August 31, 1639, the procession from Holyrood was composed of the Lord High Commissioner, Burgesses, Nobles, Trumpeters, Pursuivants, Heralds, the Regalia of Scotland and the Lyon King. Indeed, such was the ceremonial associated with the Scottish parliament before the union of 1707 that Charles II created a whole floor at the top of Holyroodhouse for the great officers of state.

But these days security is a



The new, eco-friendly Reichstag in Berlin will be "the first building powered totally by renewable sources of energy", according to its British architect, Sir Norman Foster

How to build a parliament

prime issue for anybody designing a new parliament. MPs everywhere tend to be wedded to their cars and generous provision must be made for parking - and, with it, complex measures to deter car bombs. In fact, security concerns have led to two

parliaments being built on islands in recent years: Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

At Holyrood, Dewar appears to be thinking of pedestrianisation as one means of preventing attempts at Oklahoma-style lorry bombs. But the example of

Kuwait should be a warning. There, what architect Jørn Utzon intended as "a big open covered square, in the shade of which the people can meet their leaders" has become more like a monumental carport where the leaders meet their chauffeurs.

The Edinburgh building is intended to be more open than Westminster, with the people of Scotland freely coming to see their representatives (MSPs) at work. That, too, will influence its design. In the Berlin Reichstag - soon to be the seat of German national parliament once more - Sir Norman Foster is using glass internal walls. "We and the politicians want to create cross views in and out of the chamber," he says.

What of the shape of the chamber? Westminster works on the adversarial principle, with opposing parties facing each other - as they did when the Commons first sat in the choir stalls of St Stephen's Chapel in the 14th century. Dewar, promoting the "new" politics, is going for a horse-shoe shape.

And whatever the British may claim about the "mother of parliaments", historians trace the birth of modern parliaments to the semi-circular layout of the National Assembly in Paris in 1793. This in turn derived its form from the Greek theatre. It is also the shape chosen for the new Cyprus parliament, designed by the London office of Kohn Pedersen Fox, which is due to be completed in 2000.

"I favour anything that fosters consensus and constructive debate - round, oval, horseshoe or horseshoe," says Sebastian Tombs, secretary of the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland. Most "democratic" of all, however, is the full circle adopted in the Bonn parliament by Behnisch (architects of Bristol's new Performing Arts Centre) and

the regional parliaments in Berlin and Dresden. Continuous circular seating is also appropriate where proportional representation produces a greater spread of parties.

Speaking arrangements are crucial. The trend is for microphones at well-equipped desks, though this increases the danger of MPs speaking from papers. By contrast, a queue for a lecturer induces a sense of equity but makes interventions difficult.

The entrance and public areas of a parliament are as important as the chamber. In

“The shape of the chamber reflects the style of the politics”

America's state capitals the tendency has been to create a public floor with a "power floor" above, where the chamber is set. Politicians like to mill around outside the chamber - to see and be seen "like the rich at the opera and the races", says architect Allen McCree. In the Reichstag, Foster says, "the public will be able to use the prime entrances and levels along with the politicians, and have access to upper level viewing galleries and a roof restaurant". Dewar promises "a new building combining history

with modernity". One of the great glories of Edinburgh is that so many of its magnificent public buildings could only be in Scotland. So can we expect Modernism with a local flavour - lots of stone and a hint of turrets and stepped gables? In Rajasthan they had no qualms. In 1994, the sacred geometry and castle look of the winning design for the new assembly was intended to "embody the tradition" and very heritage of the people.

In European terms "modern" means transparency and glass. But the all-glass new European Assembly in Strasbourg has met with stinging criticism. "Like a job lot from the Isle of Dogs," said the *Architectural Review*. Scotland's parliament will inevitably be part stone, part national monument. In the 19th century this meant frescos and statues. Many parliaments have museums, but the more challenging solution is to require the architect to use the regalia as focal points through the building.

The Scots will certainly demand an eco-friendly building. Foster is setting the pace.

The Reichstag will be the first building powered totally by renewable sources of energy. It's a power station with photovoltaic cells collecting energy on the roof, and summer warmth being stored in aquifers 400m below ground for use in winter, he says.

Only one thing is certain. Every decision Dewar makes will have untold consequences. For, as Churchill shrewdly observed, "we shape our buildings, and afterwards our buildings shape us".

BRIEFLY NOTED

Royal progress

OPERA: Putting its domestic troubles aside, the Royal Opera has announced a summer of festival hopping. In June it unveils its new production of Verdi's *Masnadieri* at the Baden Baden Festival, appearing in the town's new Festspielhaus. The following month it is off to Finland for *Peter Grimes* at Savonlinna.

After that comes a two-week residency at the Edinburgh Festival, led by Bernard Haitink. A trip to Amsterdam follows: the Royal Opera's concert performance of *Die Walküre* will open a Concertgebouw series paying tribute to Haitink. And finally, a return to London for Albert Hall concert performances of *The Ring* (Sep 28 to Oct 3), repeated (Oct 5-10) in Symphony Hall, Birmingham.

POP: Two of London's biggest pop venues have a new owner. The McKenzie Group has bought the 4,272-capacity Brixton Academy and the 2,000-capacity Shepherds Bush Empire from the Break for the Border group. The price was £3.5 million, but McKenzie will also take on outstanding debts, said to total £1.9 million.

McKenzie says that it wants to broaden the appeal of the buildings. Plans include more comedy and even ballet. "The two best venues in the country are not performing anywhere near their capabilities," says Ian Howard, McKenzie's managing director.

LITERATURE: Tom Wolfe's first work of fiction for ten years, *Ambush at Fort Bragg*, will be published in Britain on March 16 - but in audio rather than printed form. Radio 4 will begin to serialise the short story that evening, and the work will also be released on BBC audio cassette and CD. The author of *Bonfire of the Vanities* apparently thought that bringing out this story in non-print form - it concerns the manipulation of news - was an "innovative opportunity".

AWARDS: The veteran Hungarian-born violinist György Pauk, who has lived in Britain for nearly 40 years, travels to Budapest this week to receive the Order of the Hungarian Republic, the country's highest honour for civilians. It recognises his outstanding performances and his contribution to education, notably his work with young Hungarian violinists.

MEMORIAL: In a remarkable demonstration of cross-Channel affection, 1,250 French singers from 25 local choirs gathered in Besançon yesterday to give a performance of Sir Michael Tippett's oratorio *A Child of Our Time*. Tippett died 12 days ago. BBC2 is screening a documentary, also called *A Child of Our Time*, at 10.50pm this Saturday; and the London Symphony Orchestra will dedicate its February 15 Barbican concert to the composer. Conducted by Sir Colin Davis, the programme includes *The Rose Lake*, the composer's last orchestral work.

A thanksgiving service for the life of Sir Georg Solti will take place in Westminster Abbey on March 4 at 11.30am. For tickets (maximum two per applicant) send a stamped addressed envelope to the Assistant Receiver General, Chapter Office, Westminster Abbey, London SW1P 3PA.

HAVING been involved in the conception of Zdenek Lukas's Sixth Symphony - "It's quite different when you write for someone you like," the composer is quoted as saying - Petr Altrichter not unreasonably has a special affection for the work. That is presumably why he chose to make it the first of several contemporary Czech scores he will be introducing to the Philharmonic Hall over the next few years.

He should look more dispassionately, however, at the way he uses his British orchestra's limited resources for presenting new music and his audience's similarly limited willingness to hear it. Really, if Lukas had hated the conductor of the Prague Symphony Orchestra, as Altrichter was at the time, he could scarcely have produced a more embarrassing exercise in grandiloquence than his Sixth Symphony. Although written in 1991, two years after the foundation of the Czech Republic and in complete

Echoes of the Party

CONCERT

freedom from all political requirements. It sounds like the essential Soviet symphony in every respect apart from its echoes of Janáček and Messiaen.

Of Lukas himself there seems to be no trace, except for a certain skill in blending lurid colours and in expressing orchestral confidence. Structurally, it makes little sense, least of all in the over-long last movement of the three, which combine to occupy

30 minutes of valuable concert time. And that's not counting the unenlightening introduction to this first UK performance.

Altrichter and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra were more fruitfully employed in a pleasantly cheerful performance of Schubert's *Rosamunde* Overture and an interesting account of Brahms's First Piano Concerto. Of course, Peter Donohoe has been playing the D minor Concerto for years, and his interpretation has long been familiar. But it is changing. There is a new thoughtfulness to it, a more analytical approach which is replacing the youthful ardour which was always such a vital element. The transition is not yet complete, but when he replaces what he has lost with the penetrative clarity he already applies to the first two movements, the new Donohoe Brahms should be no less rewarding than the old.

GERALD LARNER

Now South America takes it away

The month-long residency by Airto Moreira and Flora Purim at Ronnie Scott's has become an annual event. For the past few years the veteran Brazilian duo led the band Fourth World, featuring the explosive guitar of José Neto, but this year they have emerged with a revamped line-up, comprising mostly Brazilian sidemen.

Featuring no guitarist but dual keyboards and two bass players, the band takes the name *Light As A Feather*, the title of an album Moreira and Purim made with Chick Corea in the early 1970s. It implies no lessening of serious musical intent, but does indicate a subtle change of direction from Fourth World's recent fusions, which had seen them delving further into indige-

WORLD MUSIC

nous rhythms and African roots. They opened their first set with *Africa*, full of tribal chants and Moreira's extraordinary battery of percussion, cow bells, whistles and rain sticks, offset against impressionistic keyboards. But it was untypical, and the rest of the evening's two sets saw the band in more mainstream jazz vein with José Avellán and Hélio Alves taking the lead on assorted keyboards. They were complemented by Widor

Santiago on saxophone and the blend was at its delectable best on Corea's atmospheric *500 Miles High* and Don Grolnick's *Nothing Personal*.

In the vocal department the 55-year-old Purim sounded as fluid on *Light As A Feather* as when she first recorded the number with Corea. Her appealing, trademark vibrato was undiminished on a brace of songs by the great Milton Nascimento as she explored some sinuous Brazilian rhythms, marrying samba and swing to funk and bossa nova.

Both Sizzo Machado and Gary Brown, the only non-Brazilian in the line-up, played six-string electric bass, increasing their range and melodic ability and compensating for Neto's absence: A bass duet

built around a flamenco theme while the rest of the band took a break was both technically agile and surprisingly pastoral.

Moreira and Purim are an institution, married for more than 25 years and musical partners for even longer. Their energy is phenomenal and both have new albums on the way. Moreira with *Tribal Ethno Dance* and Purim on a collection of Brazilian songs by Nascimento. They also have the felicitous ability to coax the best out of others, and *Light As A Feather* is a worthy addition to a long and proud career which has seen them work with most of the jazz greats of the past three decades.

NIGEE WILLIAMSON

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Nicholas Snowman, South Bank director, relives the London Sinfonieta's birth 30 years ago
The march of the mods



The way they were: members of the London Sinfonieta in 1968, when their debut concert launched them into the vanguard of new-music performance

On Saturday, 30 years to the day after its debut concert, the London Sinfonieta will appear at the Queen Elizabeth Hall. Created out of enthusiasm and friendship, that then unknown ensemble has since premiered almost 250 works - from Berio and Boulez to Tavener and Turturle.



Snowman: co-founder of the Sinfonieta

The reviews after our first concert were unbelievably positive. The critical fraternity saw something exciting and "look a punt" on us, just as the Arts Council had done.

BBC producer, invited us to record it for them, and William Glock booked us into the Prongs. Soon John Lennon and Ringo Starr became interested in The Whale, which is how we came to make our first record for the Beatles' own label, Apple.

David Atherton and I founded the Sinfonieta after running the Cambridge University Opera Society. We had assembled a team of very fine musicians, and it seemed a pity to say goodbye to them when we graduated. So the idea of creating an orchestra took shape, and we decided on the name on a summit day at my parents' house.

Thirty years ago, the atmosphere of British music-making was very different. There were no management consultants, business plans or "assessors". Instead we were greatly encouraged by risk-taking allies.

Today, where others turn back in easy nostalgia, the Sinfonieta's players seem already to have reached the 21st century. Thirty years ago, Schoenberg was our "classic" composer; now Britwistle is the classic, and the Sinfonieta plays Schoenberg with the ease of old music.

GREAT BRITISH HOPES
Rising stars in the arts firmament
STUART MACRAE

Age: 21. Profession: Composer. Busy man: Recently signed with Novello music publishers as their youngest composer, and takes part in the London Sinfonieta's 30th anniversary Jerwood Composition Project this weekend.



Hilary Finch

analysis, ethnomusicology and electroacoustics. "All of which still feed into my own musical language."

Before that? He had no composition lessons until he was 17, "but from the age of nine I played around with chords on my grandmother's harmonium". He started reading music at ten and writing it at 12. Durham University trained him in

LONDON

BOBHOOD QUARTET: The Russian foursome continue their magical music-making here in a performance opening with a selection of works by Schubert concluding with Brahms's Piano Quartet in F minor. With the pianist Lucia M. Bostoy.

ICEE: Roy Shill's adaptation for Black Theatre Co-operative of his 1993 cult novel of a young man seeking love in the hot of crack addiction in the East End. Directed by co-producer with Nottingham Playhouse. Comes with a great soundtrack.

NEW RELEASES
BATTLESHIP POTEMKIN: Eisenstein's unshakable classic about a Russian fleet's mutiny, made in 1925. Curzon Phoenix (0171-369 1721) NBT (0171-428 2222) £

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A daily guide to arts and entertainment compiled by Mark Hargre

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Geoff Brown's assessment of films in London and where to watch them

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Large advertisement for 'Summer' featuring a scenic landscape image and text: 'This is your best opportunity to buy this superb new property in a prestigious and historic location on the river of Kingston-upon-Thames. Now only one 2 bedroom villa apartment remains. Act now and enjoy lazy days this summer. Tel: 0181 546 9177 (24 hrs) Prices from: £270,000 Fairclough Homes'.

Large advertisement for 'The charm of old. The best of new. Come and see the New Heritage Range.' featuring a large image of a house and a list of features: 'The best of modern housebuilding gives you maximum comfort with minimal maintenance. The best of traditional British architecture brings you a home with a style, character and charm of its own. Now, with Redrow's acclaimed New Heritage Range, it's easy to enjoy the very best of both worlds. Visit your nearest Redrow development and see for yourself how we've beautifully brought together everything you could want from a new home.' Includes a list of Redrow developments across the UK and contact information: 'REDROW BUILDS HOMES THROUGHOUT THE UK FOR DETAILS CALL FREON 0800 66 44 22'.

What a waste of our houses

This week the Government asked for views on new housing. Christine Webb reports on calls to change the laws governing VAT

Pressure groups are calling for changes to tax laws that dissuade owners and developers from refurbishing derelict homes. Refurbishment work attracts the full amount of VAT while the building of new homes is zero-rated.

The Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE), the Empty Homes Agency, the Civic Trust and the Chartered Institute of Housing say that this encourages builders to seek greenfield sites, to the detriment of the countryside, while about 800,000 potential homes in urban areas remain empty.

Renewing empty properties to bring them back into use attracts VAT of 17.5 per cent, which is enough to make refurbishment uneconomical. The call is for the tax to be dropped to 5 per cent and for the Chancellor of the Exchequer to put 5 per cent on new-build to help to make up the shortfall.

The Empty Homes Agency, a charity affiliated to the National Federation of Housing Associations, is dedicated to bringing empty homes back into use. It says that some of the 800,000 empty homes in towns and cities could be renovated, including flats over shops, empty hostels and nursing homes, as well as existing residential properties.

Bob Lawrence, the agency's chief executive, says: "A speculative builder works on a 10 per cent profit margin and builds on greenfields. If he works on housing in disrepair he has to work on a 27.5 per cent profit margin, which is probably not viable."

The agency has joined the CPRE, the Civic Trust and the Chartered Institute of Housing in calling for a harmonisation of VAT to "level the playing field". Customs and Excise says that it cannot comment.

The agency hopes that empty homes can be brought back into play, there will be a commensurate relief in the pressure put on greenfield sites by the projected need for 4.4 million new homes.

The Commons Select Committee on Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs had invited submissions on housing this week. Tony Burton, of the CPRE, says:

"The Government is thinking about this whole question of new housing and we're expecting a statement in March. Last month the Government indicated that it was interested in applying economic instruments to planning and land use. That may mean penalising people for holding on to empty buildings or levying fees when greenfield sites are used."

"At present, there is a marked financial penalty for developers who want to refurbish run-down parts of urban England, and encouragement to build on greenfield sites. There is potential to build on 650 square miles of rural England in 25 years, which we need to relieve by removing an incentive to concrete the countryside."

Yet a government research paper published in 1996 recommended

that there should be tax incentives to encourage private landlords to undertake repairs and improvements. *Vacant Dwellings in the Private Sector* recommended "tax incentives for private landlords to encourage them to undertake repairs and improvements of vacant property".

The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) is worried that the removal of zero-rating on new homes may damage the supply of homes that is vital to meet the UK's housing needs. But it points out that as construction costs usually amount to less than 50 per cent of a development, the addition of 5 per cent VAT would not form too great a barrier.

Dr Stephen King, a RICS policy officer, says: "Before we do anything we really need some modelling on this to see what impact harmonisation might have on the supply of housing. We think there is a provision in the European Union's sixth directive for a reduced rate of VAT on refurbishment, but only when housing is required as part of social policy. There may be numerous problems in defining terms, in particular, social housing beyond that provided directly by the State (local authority housing). This is a complicated area. Can the British Government reduce VAT on refurbishment under this ruling? We would like to



Flats broke: Derelict homes and, main picture, a terrace of handsome houses in Notting Hill, London, being turned into apartments

see this matter cleared up."

Roger Humber, the chief executive of the House-Builders Federation, says that this is a debatable interpretation of a European Court of Justice ruling against the British Government. "All construction work was zero-rated until 1986 when the European Court ruled that the scope of zero-rating here went further than that given by the exemption agreed in the 1970s," he says. "So it is the EU that has made this distinction, which is not a happy one."

The UK fought and won the case on new housebuilding by arguing that housing was a social policy and that for 40 years the Government had encouraged housing and, since that was its social policy, it could be zero-rated. The court went for that argument —

but rejected it for renovation. "Clearly, it would be damaging to the new homes market to get rid of zero-rating on new homes and we were always opposed to taxing renovation work. But it would be a perverse argument to say because something wrong is applied to renovation it should also be applied to new-build."

Nick Sutton, the managing director of the developer Crown Dilmun, is developing flats at Chepstow Place in West London. He says that VAT does not apply to the conversion of commercial property, such as offices, into homes. He adds: "The legislation discriminates against the redevelopment of existing residential buildings that would include buildings such as hostels being converted to residential apartments. The value of

existing residential buildings is reduced due to this irrecoverable VAT, which may prevent redevelopment. Comprehensive residential redevelopment of existing residential buildings should be treated in exactly the same way as commercial buildings."

Michael Gwilliam, of the Civic Trust, says: "The London Planning Advisory Committee has commissioned us to undertake research in London looking at empty accommodation in sites over shops. It is a contribution to a wider question and the work will be completed by April. We are sure that we'll explore this issue again."

That is clearly the case. Fourteen local authorities have joined forces to form the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Empty Property Forum, which says there are two problems

with the system. Amanda Scott, the chairwoman, says: "One is the impact on total scheme costs. The amount of VAT can often make or break a scheme. The other issue is how much more housing could be created if VAT were reduced to 5 per cent. In Hampshire, for example, an average refurbishment scheme is £15,000, plus VAT. If VAT were reduced to 5 per cent, the savings, based on a programme of 30 schemes per authority, would amount to an additional 53 homes created a year in this county alone."

"If the Government is serious about urban renewal and making best use of existing housing stock to save greenfield sites, it must take heed of the Empty Homes Agency's recommendation and use VAT as an incentive to encourage re-use of existing buildings."

MEPC's plans have already been damned by Richard Pollard, secretary of Save Britain's Heritage. He says: "These plans threaten to defile some of Britain's most important buildings."

The PUDC has given MEPC time to develop detailed plans and will decide in January whether it will officially back the scheme and, apply for, government approval.

Heritage objects to Navy yard scheme

ENGLISH HERITAGE has objected to plans to convert the Royal William Yard in Plymouth, one of Britain's finest landmarks, into a shopping centre, flats, offices and a multi-storey car park.

A spokesman for the conservation body recently criticised proposals from MEPC, the country's third largest property developer, which include building glass canopies to link the ten 19th-century buildings, as "fundamentally in conflict with the character of the architecture".

The collection of buildings, once a Royal Navy victualling yard, includes seven Grade I listed buildings.

The £60 million MEPC project, which includes two 750-space car parks, has been unofficially adopted by the Plymouth Urban Development Corporation (PUDC), the government body charged with finding a new use for the buildings.

The spokesman for English Heritage adds: "The character of the existing architecture is classical with strongly defined masonry and walls. We have advised MEPC and the Plymouth Urban Development Corporation that the proposal would fundamentally conflict with the character of the architecture."

The granite and limestone buildings were built between 1824 and 1832 to the designs of John Rennie on a 14-acre site on a peninsula. Geoff Timbrell, chief executive of the PUDC, says: "We understand that Heritage advisers have to look at this issue only from a Heritage perspective. But we have to take a wider view. We believe that visitors need protection from the weather."

MEPC's plans have already been damned by Richard Pollard, secretary of Save Britain's Heritage. He says: "These plans threaten to defile some of Britain's most important buildings."

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RACHEL KELLY

Adam Barnard on the growing market for residential investment

Buy to Let pays its way

Adrian Sherratt

Alok Soni has every reason to be pleased with himself. A year ago, Mr Soni, 34, bolstered by the success of his management consultancy firm in Ealing, West London, was looking to invest. At the same time, property was finally showing signs of revival and Mr Soni saw an opportunity.

Now he has eight properties bringing in regular rental income. Mr Soni is one of many investors who have recently turned to residential investment. New figures show that UK and overseas corporate investors may spend as much as £400 million on the residential sector this year. Both moves point to a shift from traditional British owner-occupancy into a continental-style lettings market.

This interest owes much to a scheme called Buy to Let, started by a group of letting agents called the Association of Residential Letting Agencies (Arla) in 1996. The scheme looked at the difficulties facing private investors.

Since it began, more than £300 million has been spent on residential investment. Halifax Mortgage Services says: "Over the past 12 months there has been much more interest in buying to let."

Malcolm Harrison of Arla says: "The Eighties were a decade when the Tories flogged off every house that they could find. By 1989 rentals had fallen to 7 per cent of the UK housing market. Now, with less pressure to buy, renting has become more socially acceptable."

"There is a need for greater mobility at present. People's jobs change and the divorce rate is higher."

Despite the increased demand for renting in the first half of the Nineties, the private rental sector lacked quality property, and this prompted the scheme. Previously, the only mortgage available to a private investor was a commercial loan. Arla convinced many leading lenders to offer a special package for residential investors with rates virtually identical to those available to a owner occupier.

For investors such as Mr Soni, the revival of a sluggish property market provided im-



"Two years ago I saw the market" — Mr Soni in front of one of his London properties

SPECIALIST BODY FOR A SPECIALIST BUSINESS

THE Association of Residential Letting Agents (Arla), which launches its fortnightly rentals directory in *The Times* today (see promotion, right), was founded in 1981 by Neville Lee and John Birch, two London letting agents.

Malcolm Harrison of Arla says: "At a Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors conference, it was noticed that there were a number of professional real estate organisations, but not one was concerned with letting." A specialist body seemed to be needed.

Since it was formed, Arla has grown to incorporate more than 1,200 Arla letting offices. A code of practice has been implemented, under which any potential Arla agent must allow their accounts to be checked, must have insurance, and must take out fidelity bonds through Arla.

"This is to protect the public," Mr Harrison says, referring to a "seal of security" for anyone renting

property. He says: "I could see the market start to show signs of turning two years ago."

The new mortgage schemes encouraged Mr Soni to follow his instinct. "Until recently," he says, "no one would lend the money. That's why a Buy to Let mortgage is so important." He chose Mortgage Express, which offers 9 per cent variable rate mortgages, and 8.99 per cent fixed-rate mortgages until 2002.

Mr Soni's eight properties, in the London area, are all occupied. He and his wife Neena, 32, manage them together. He says: "The reason we are successful is that when we get the property, we do it up before letting it. And each time a tenant leaves, we get our

builder to perform essential maintenance."

He advises "single sourcing", using the same set of workers and suppliers for each home. "You don't want 20 different people supplying you with washing machines."

He applies the same philosophy to the estate agent. Bradley Bestley in Ealing, "After a while you develop a rapport." He can now rely on it to contact him when interesting property appears on the market, and to keep his tenancies filled.

Mr Soni is delighted with his portfolio. A typical example of a successful investment was a house in Graham Avenue, W13, bought for £70,000 and now making £1,100 a month, a return of more than 10 per cent net. He

aims to make up to 20 per cent gross return on his initial investment.

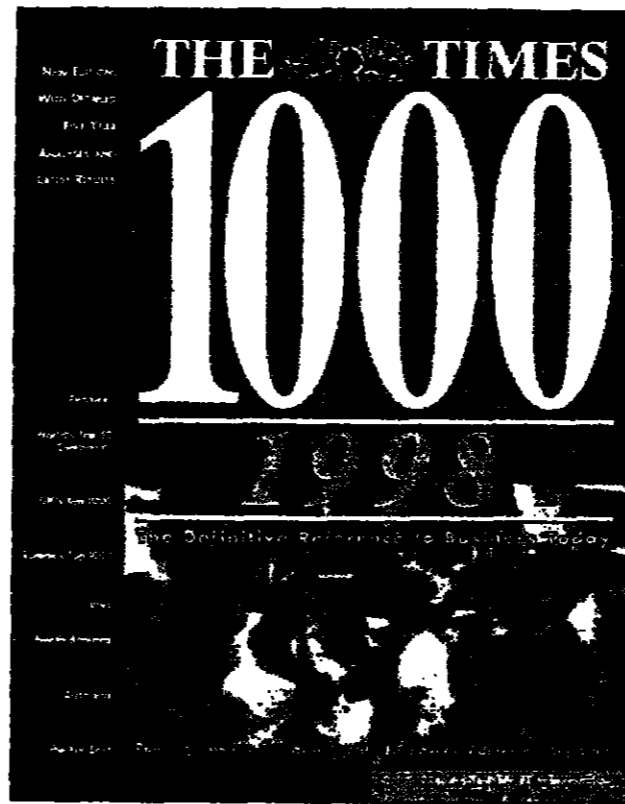
While property looks as though it will remain an attractive investment, Mr Harrison advises caution. "Bricks and mortar are a good buy," he says, "but it is a medium to long-term investment. Prospective buyers must approach houses as an investment, not allowing personal taste to cloud their judgment and must research demand."

● Arla 01942 826 555 operates a Buy to Let helpline, open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5.30pm.

● The telephone number of the Central Heating Information Council mentioned last week in an article about energy-saving is 0345 277200.

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RACING: NEWMARKET TRAINER MAKES MARK WITH FIRST RUNNER

Nosedá given ideal launch by Nautical Warning

By ROBERT WRIGHT
The Hammersmith Apprentices Handicap at a chilly Lingfield Park yesterday would have gone largely unnoticed but for providing Jeremy Nosedá with a winner from his first runner in this country. Moreover, the narrow success of Nautical Warning will have fired a shot across the bows of several trainers enjoying a break in sunnier climes.

Richard Evans
Nap: Red Lighter (3.00 Huntingdon)
Red Lighter, who loves the mud, made a most promising start to chasing when second at the age of seven or eight while a pupil at Stourthorpe College in Lancashire, summer holidays were soon spent working for Brian Swift and Jeremy Tree. While his A-level results warranted a place at the best universities, his choice of "further education" came in the form of a job as assistant trainer to John Dunlop at Arundel.

That deal was finalised in August and owners have been quick to secure his services. Michael Tabor, Peter Savill, Hesmonds Stud and Henry Schmidt-Brodner - who owns Nautical Warning - among the trainers, while Nosedá nominates Jim and Geraldine Ryan, from Milltown Stud in Ireland, as two of his staunchest supporters.

Nosedá is not going to waste any time building on his initial success. He intends to saddle his second runner, Wild Edge, on the Equitrac at Lingfield tomorrow. It would take a brave man to bet against it.



Nosedá gives Nautical Warning a well-deserved pat after his victory at Lingfield yesterday

MOTOR SPORT

McRae recovers from early setback

COLIN MCRAE, of Great Britain, and his Subaru team-mate Piero Liati, of Monte Carlo, bounced back in the Monte Carlo Rally yesterday on the day that Tommi Makinen, the world champion, crashed out. After early setbacks, McRae and Liati were able to put pressure on the Spaniard, Carlos Sainz, in the lead.

McRae, who took over the lead when Makinen, of Finland, crashed in the first special stage yesterday, was 45 seconds ahead of the four-time world champion Juha Kankkunen, of Finland, in a Ford Escort.

Prost also cast doubts on Hill's ability to win another world championship. "I am not sure he has the motivation, we will have to see," he said.

TODAY'S FIXTURES

- FOOTBALL
1.1-5 MARGAL BLUES 21 (6.30) M. Johnson 5-11-10
2. 7-20 UPHAM SURPRISE 258 (8) J. M. 10-11-11
3. 2-2 DARI 32 R. M. 10-11-11
4. 10-10 GAINBY 34 (8.5) M. 10-11-11
5. 1-2-2 INTO THE WOODS 11 (6) M. 10-11-11
6. 2-2-2 DEL DRY 31 (6) M. 10-11-11
7. 1-2-2 INTO THE WOODS 11 (6) M. 10-11-11
8. 2-2-2 DEL DRY 31 (6) M. 10-11-11
9. 1-2-2 INTO THE WOODS 11 (6) M. 10-11-11
10. 2-2-2 DEL DRY 31 (6) M. 10-11-11

Table with 2 columns: Race Name, Time. Includes 1.10 Lord Rooble, 1.40 Alhoseam, 2.10 MR MAGNETIC (nap), 2.10 WINDSOR CASTLE NOVICES CHASE.

Table with 2 columns: Race Name, Time. Includes 1.10 WINDSOR CASTLE NOVICES CHASE, 1.40 RAYS JUVENILE NOVICES HURDLE.

Table with 2 columns: Race Name, Time. Includes 1.40 RAYS JUVENILE NOVICES HURDLE, 2.10 RAYNOLD MAIDEN HURDLE.

Table with 2 columns: Race Name, Time. Includes 2.10 RAYNOLD MAIDEN HURDLE, 3.10 JANUARY HANDICAP HURDLE.

Table with 2 columns: Race Name, Time. Includes 3.10 JANUARY HANDICAP HURDLE, 3.40 WINDSOR CASTLE NOVICES CHASE.

Table with 2 columns: Race Name, Time. Includes 3.40 WINDSOR CASTLE NOVICES CHASE, 4.10 DITCHET HANDICAP HURDLE.

Table with 2 columns: Race Name, Time. Includes 4.10 DITCHET HANDICAP HURDLE, 4.20 BIRMINGHAM HANDICAP.

Table with 2 columns: Race Name, Time. Includes 4.20 BIRMINGHAM HANDICAP, 4.20 TIPTON CLAIMING STAKES.

Table with 2 columns: Race Name, Time. Includes 4.20 TIPTON CLAIMING STAKES, 4.20 MANCHESTER HANDICAP.

Table with 2 columns: Race Name, Time. Includes 4.20 MANCHESTER HANDICAP, 4.20 COURSE SPECIALISTS.

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RACELINE
0930 168
WINDSOR HUNTINGDON WYHAMPTON
FULL RESULTS SERVICE 168

RESULTS FROM LINGFIELD PARK YESTERDAY
Going: standard
1.15 (11) Nautical Warning (C. Llewellyn)
1.40 (11) Lord Rooble (J. M. 10-11-11)
2.10 (11) MR MAGNETIC (nap) (J. M. 10-11-11)
2.30 (11) WINDSOR CASTLE NOVICES CHASE (J. M. 10-11-11)
3.10 (11) JANUARY HANDICAP HURDLE (J. M. 10-11-11)
3.40 (11) WINDSOR CASTLE NOVICES CHASE (J. M. 10-11-11)
4.10 (11) DITCHET HANDICAP HURDLE (J. M. 10-11-11)
4.20 (11) BIRMINGHAM HANDICAP (J. M. 10-11-11)
4.20 (11) TIPTON CLAIMING STAKES (J. M. 10-11-11)
4.20 (11) MANCHESTER HANDICAP (J. M. 10-11-11)
4.20 (11) COURSE SPECIALISTS (J. M. 10-11-11)
4.20 (11) SPECIALISTS (J. M. 10-11-11)

OTHER SPORT
BASKETBALL: Uni-Ball Trophy: Quarter-finals, second leg: Thames Valley Tigers v London Leopards (10-10).
LONDON TOWNS (7-3): Leicester Riders v Sheffield Sharks (6-6)
ICE HOCKEY: Superleague: Sheffield Steelers v Bracon (3-0).
RUGBY UNION: Club matches: Cambridge Univ v RAF (7-15)
OTHER SPORT: BASKETBALL: Uni-Ball Trophy: Quarter-finals, second leg: Thames Valley Tigers v London Leopards (10-10).
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ICE HOCKEY: Superleague: Sheffield Steelers v Bracon (3-0).
RUGBY UNION: Club matches: Cambridge Univ v RAF (7-15)

Managers who must learn the error of their ways

It is the clearest possible sign of arrested mental development in short, a complete giveaway. It is the expectation that life is organised on a just and fair basis. It is a belief that a glaring wrong cannot possibly occur, or, if it does, it can be put right in the twinkling of an eye.

This belief is the deeply-held conviction of every football manager that drew breath, and perhaps it is the guiding principle of sport itself. Last weekend, we once again heard Gordon Strachan, the Coventry City manager, singing his aria of bewilderment at this extraordinary phenomenon, the unfairness of life.

Picking his words with the care and circumspection of a berserker, he said: "The ref was an absolute joke." He explained further that life was beastly and unfair. "We work morning, noon and night to get things right, but the club gets nothing from refs." As if the matter of hard work and fairness were somehow connected.

Having already explained the absolute joke, he said, again with breathtaking originality: "The ref was an absolute disgrace." Perhaps the abiding mistake of football managers, perhaps of everybody in sport, is to see life in terms of absolutes. Anyway, call it Strachan's Error.

Elsewhere on a Saturday, startlingly normal for its catalogue of unfairness, we had Gillingham getting the ball in the net three times and drawing 0-0. "It infuriates me that because of referees we don't get what we deserve," Tony Pulis, their manager, said. At least one of the three goals should have been a goal, but he couldn't remember which. "I try to be professional in everything I do, then we get somebody like this who denies us what is rightfully ours."

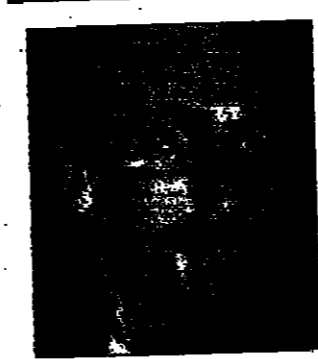
'Perhaps the referee should be paid and cherished and made to get fit'

Rightfully ours! Strachan's Error is one of the most idiotic and pathetic delusions of the sporting life and it is always expressed in these manifestly absurd terms. A football manager could, in a couple of well-chosen sentences, reduce the notion of genocide to absurdity. But the fact is that Strachan's Error also represents the most important and pressing problem in sport today.

Only a child or a football manager expects sport to be fair. But, if sport does not strain every sinew to be as fair as possible, it is nothing.

Sport must strain for complete, total — and absolute — fairness, even while knowing that such a thing is impossible to achieve. That is what sport is about, the dream of the level playing field. The great problems of sport lie not with the doers but with their judges.

SIMON BARNES



Midweek View

— so sport continues with methods of officiating that are ancient, tried, tested and proved to be wanting.

A top referee is a semi-professional. That means semi-fit and semi-rewarded. He is also deeply ambitious, seeking that level of recognition that will bring him still bigger matches: cup finals and World Cups. It is hardly surprising that the culture of despising referees is deeply embedded in the game.

Football managers always complain that referees have too much power. Perhaps the real problem is that they do not have enough, too reliant for their ambition on staying in the good books of their association and the players and managers they come up against.

professional foul and, in particular, the deliberate, illegal halting of the player moving in on goal. That was the crime committed for, as Strachan would have it, not committed) by Paul Williams (missed) free kick is not exactly a fair punishment for a genuine offence.

And, anyway, a sending-off spoils a game and the resulting suspensions merely deprive future audiences of the player in question, which is a bad business for everyone concerned.

Perhaps the referee should be able to award a penalty for offences that occur outside the box. Perhaps he should be able to award a goal, as rugby union referees can award penalty tries. Perhaps he should be given the

power and freedom to control a game not by the book, but by a genuine standard of fairness. Perhaps, more to the point, he should be paid and cherished and respected and made to get fit.

The official is the crucial figure in every sport. In rugby union, the three-official system has been shown to be palpably incapable of controlling matches between 30 professional players.

Cricket umpires until this week were dependent for their future on marks awarded by the captains of the teams they umpired, not exactly a recipe for objectivity, still less an encouragement of moral courage.

'Sport must aim for total fairness while knowing it is impossible to achieve'

FOOTBALL

Asprilla returns to Parma for £6.1m

By Our Sports Staff

HE WAS signed as a potential partner for Alan Shearer, but as the England striker returned after injury to first-team football this week at Newcastle United, so Faustino Asprilla has left the club. Asprilla rejoined Parma yesterday with Newcastle receiving 18 million lire (around £6.1 million) in exchange for the 28-year-old Colombia international, who cost them £7.5 million when he moved in the opposite direction in February, 1996.

Asprilla has signed a contract until June 2001 at Parma, with whom he won the Uefa Cup, European Cup Winners' Cup and the European Super Cup before joining Newcastle. In England, he showed only flashes of the talent that prompted Kevin Keegan to sign him in a doomed attempt to wrest the FA Carling Premiership title from Manchester United's grasp, but he was still popular with many supporters.

He started brightly, coming on as a substitute with 17 minutes to go to make his debut at Middlesbrough and turning a potential 1-0 loss into a 2-1 win, playing his part in both goals, and even this season touched rare heights, notably in scoring a hat-trick in a famous defeat of Barcelona in the European Cup Champions' League at St James' Park in September.

Alan Shearer's then world record £15 million move from Blackburn Rovers in the summer of 1996 and his partnership with Les Ferdinand led to Asprilla being forced into an unaccustomed role out wide or just behind the front two, but

when Ferdinand joined Tottenham Hotspur for £6 million at the beginning of this season, Asprilla told Kenny Dalglish, the Newcastle manager in succession to Keegan, that he wanted to stay. He then asked for a transfer.

"We would never have allowed Les to leave if Tino had not twice promised us that he was happy and settled," Dalglish said. "So we allowed Les to go. We wouldn't have done that if we knew what was going to happen."

Asprilla responded in kind. "Kevin Keegan was trying to build a team to win the championship and compete with the very best in Europe," he said. "He put together a big squad of quality players and we played some beautiful football. But then Dalglish came and dismantled it all. He lost the plot."

Asprilla's ignominious end to a Newcastle career that had started so promisingly came to an end with reports of a fight at a restaurant in the city, which left the club "obviously disappointed". Nor has he made the best of beginnings back in Parma, for his recent spate of injuries means that he is unlikely to make his debut for at least a fortnight.

Enrico Cavalcanti, a Parma spokesman, said: "The deal hinged on Asprilla passing a medical examination, which he did despite a long string of injuries that have hampered his career. His latest hernia problem, however, will delay his Italian League debut for about two weeks."

At least two weeks. Strikers proliferate at Parma, with Hernán Crespo, of Argentina, Adailton, of Brazil, Enrico Mataro competing for two available places.

It is a situation that renders even stranger Asprilla's departure. At Newcastle, a partnership with the returning Shearer, who played for the first time this season on Saturday in the 2-1 defeat of Bolton Wanderers, was beckoning since Shearer appears to have recovered from the broken ankle and damaged ligaments that had sidelined him since pre-season. Instead, the identity of Shearer's striking partner is unclear, for the time being.



Asprilla: on the move

Stuart awaits his fate after failing drugs test

JAMIE STUART, the former Charlton Athletic defender, faces a lengthy ban when he appears before a Football Association disciplinary hearing in London today after failing a random drugs test.

Stuart, a former England under-21 international, tested positive for cocaine and marijuana when the FA's doping control unit visited Charlton's training ground on November 17 and has since been charged with misconduct by the FA.

The 21-year-old was at first suspended and then released by the Nationwide League first division club after becoming the fourth Charlton player to fail a drugs test in the past three years.

After the test results were confirmed, Stuart said: "I am totally to blame for this situa-

Russell Kempson talks to a club chairman more than happy to speak his mind

Victor Green lounges in the executive box at Broadhall Way, home of Stevenage Borough, looking every inch the kindly grandfather. He is bald on top, black at the back, grey at the sides; he wears a patterned pullover; and he tells glorious tales of how he lost a few fights, won a few wars and once informed Kenny Dalglish that he was not too enamoured by his sharp, Scottish tongue.

Green is a story-teller par excellence, this week especially, the week leading up to Stevenage, from the Vauxhall Conference, playing Newcastle United, of the FA Carling Premiership, in the fourth round of the FA Cup. At Broadhall Way, too, their small but perfectly formed ground in Hertfordshire. When Newcastle travel down the A1 on Sunday, they will be afforded the maximum courtesy before battle commences.

"I don't bear any grudges," Green, the Stevenage chairman, said. "The Newcastle directors will be treated as well as those of any club coming here. They will be warmly welcomed into our boardroom and I hope they will enjoy the atmosphere and facilities of our club."

Such amicable sentiments were barely discernible earlier this month, when Stevenage's noble 2-1 victory over Swindon Town, the Nationwide League first division club, resulted in a four-round draw against Newcastle. Hysteria followed as Newcastle proclaimed their displeasure at having to play at so humble an abode.

Green, though claiming to prefer the quiet life, lapped it

Green revels in spotlight on Stevenage



Green, a chairman who has fought many a battle on behalf of his beloved Stevenage Borough, spends much of his time at Broadhall Way

up. "Am I high-profile? I suppose so, yes, but it's because I tend to say what other people only think. I've always been outspoken, and if I do take that profile, I think it's because it will benefit the club or there has been an injustice that needs to be rectified."

Newcastle's appeal against staging the game at Broadhall Way was rejected by the Football Association, after the visit of a three-strong delegation from St James' Park. "It got out of hand, it was so unnecessary," Green said.

"We have a ground which has a safety certificate and an A-grade rating from the Football League. Full stop. What annoyed me was that Newcastle put in an objection before they'd even seen the ground."

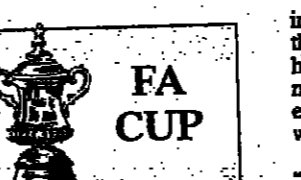
Stevenage agreed to erect a temporary stand, which will accommodate 2,200 Newcastle supporters, to appease their big brothers. "The cost will exceed the revenue," Green said. "It was purely a gesture."

However, it did not satisfy Dalglish, the Newcastle manager, who made his objections known in a telephone call.

Green, no respecter of reputations, laughed. "It was a rather bizarre conversation with Kenny and I only understood part of it," he said. "I assume it was a bad line."

"He started lambasting me, we exchanged a few words and he said that they'd play us on Hackney Marshes if they had to. So I said: 'Fine.' But I don't really know why he felt the need to speak to me."

"He was annoyed and aggressive and I'm not prepared



FA CUP

to have any football manager, including my own, talking to me in a tone like that. Kenny Dalglish can stick to doing football games and, if he has a concern for safety, which I understand, he should at least have the trust in his own management to be able to deal with it."

Green, 59, a divorcee, lives

TOMORROW

Jan Briscoe: from A-team to loyalty bonus

in south Hertfordshire with three of his seven children. He has retired from most of his multifarious business interests and devotes most of his waking hours to Stevenage.

"I don't sleep a lot," he said. "I go to bed at about 11.30pm and I'm up again at 2am and back at the club." He gets there in his Rolls Royce Silver Spirit III.

Injustice is a familiar theme of his, yet his quest for public redress is not always successful. Two years ago, when Stevenage won the Conference, they were denied access to the Football League because their ground was deemed unsuitable.

In the course of an ultimately fruitless legal campaign, it was revealed that Stevenage had approached Torquay United, whose League position

they were endangering, and made a financial inducement. Stevenage were fined £25,000, suspended for two years, by the Football Association.

Green remains defiant. "Not getting in the League was painful, it hurt," he said, "but it's gone now. We'll just have to win the Conference again. As far as the so-called 'bung' was concerned, ours was not a bung at all. There was no suggestion of an illegal payment being made. None at all."

"OK, we were being cheeky, but it's common practice in all businesses. People do this sort of thing. But illegal? No. If it was, we would have been arrested by the police."

Victory against Newcastle would right many perceived wrongs. "Can we beat them?" Green said. "Of course we can."



Boli has 19 goals this season. Photograph: Mike Scott

Boli given stage to emulate friend's starring role in Theatre of Dreams

THE world and his dog awaited a coherent response from Eric Cantona. Why had he launched a kung-fu style kick into the crowd at Crystal Palace? A week after the incident, curiosity finally won the better of Roger Boli. He plucked the courage to telephone his old pal.

"Roger," Cantona told him, "I am afraid I am crazy. I cannot explain it, not even to you my friend."

When Boli talks of his former teammate, he sounds like a schoolboy reciting tall stories of the naughtiest child in the class. The mere mention of the name prompts a smile, then a chuckle, a Gallic shrug and a gesticulative tapping on the side of the head with his forefinger. "His judgment, sometimes, is very strange, but his heart is big, big, big," Boli said. And he belly-laughed.

The pair have remained in contact since they spent five years together at Auxerre in the 1980s. They began as schoolboys trying to make their way in the game and left as under-21 internationals to seek fame and fortune elsewhere. Cantona, notoriously, went south to Marseille before travelling his way to England. Boli headed north to Lille and Lens, then to Le Havre.

Eventually, last summer, he did something crazy himself. He signed for Walsall after 13 seasons playing in the

Richard Hobson on the Frenchman whose move to second division Walsall mystified Eric Cantona

French first division. This time, it was Cantona calling to check the sanity of Boli. "He asked what was wrong with me," Boli said. "I did not know what he meant. He just could not understand why I had signed for Walsall."

The deal came about through an agent who persuaded Boli he had contacts in England. "My dream was to play here. I thought Walsall were in the first division, though when I came did I realise they were only second division. But I said, OK, I will start here and perhaps go higher." Boli said. He put in a transfer request two months into the season. The FA Cup fourth-round tie against Manchester United at Old Trafford on Saturday is his chance to catch an influential eye.

"Everybody in France knows Old Trafford because of Cantona. Now television is coming from France to see Roger. Cantona told me he left football because he thought he could go no further. He was desperate to win in

Europe, but when his team lost to Dortmund last year he thought it was not possible. That was a bad, bad time for him. But now, I think they can win it without him. You see, Cantona, he cannot be right always."

Boli has attracted several scouts to the Besco Stadium. He is the division's leading scorer with 19 goals, and is best compared with Ian Wright: small, sharp and slippery. At 32, though, his best chance of playing in the FA Carling Premiership may have occurred two years ago, when he had an unsuccessful trial for West Ham United.

While his younger brother, Basile, represented France at senior level, Roger failed to take that next step. In 1993-94 he was the joint leading scorer in France but could not displace David Ginola on the left wing for the national team. Boli, Ivory-Coast born, insists that he would have made the squad had France reached the 1994 World Cup finals.

Cantona has declined to break from his duties to return to Old Trafford on Saturday. Boli invited him after Walsall's 2-0 win against Peterborough United in the third round, when he discovered Cantona would be filming in London this weekend. "He said not to think about the great players. He said we have a chance, but I know it is very tiny."

MacLaurin opportunity reach out
Ambrose rumor prompt curt der
SPORT
Guidance system for coach
Wal

CRICKET

MacLaurin seeks opportunity to reach out for Sky

By Alan Lee, Cricket Correspondent

THE sensitive issue of whether or not Test matches should be preserved for terrestrial television was scheduled to be debated in Parliament last night. The issue is being discussed against the background of a warning that the health and future of English cricket are at risk. A submission to the Government by the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) concludes that, unless Tests are de-listed, allowing rights negotiations with satellite channels, "we cannot be optimistic about the future of our game".

This is the most serious shot yet fired by the ECB in its intensifying efforts to have cricket removed from the protected list. Its view is that the financial base of the game will be dangerously undermined unless it is free to sell its shop-window product to the highest bidder.

The simple fact is that without de-listing, the future of English cricket is being placed in serious doubt.

The subject is dear to many and lobbying has been impassioned. Next week, the review committee installed to overhaul the list has its second and pivotal meeting and a decision on all listed events is due from Chris Smith, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, before Easter.

Although feelings run high on both sides, there is a growing consensus that cricket is in a unique position. Test series in England last 30 days, or 180 hours, and comprise six matches, hardly a fair comparison with other listed events such as the three minutes of The Derby, the 90 minutes of the FA Cup Final or even finals weekend at Wimbledon. Unlike other sports, cricketers' income depends almost entirely on this single product.

The latest, six-page document despatched to the ministry by the ECB points out that television rights now account for 40 per cent of cricketers' central income and that 70 per cent of its revenue is generated by Tests.

With a fresh round of television rights to be negotiated this year, the anxiety of the Board is easily understood. When, in 1994, a four-year deal worth £8 million was struck, the only negotiating restriction was that Tests could not be offered on a pay-per-view basis. The Broadcasting Act of 1996 tightened the limitation so that, as things stand, BSkyB, an associate company of News Corporation, owner of The Times, could not bid at all.

In all probability, the ECB, sensitive to public concerns, would not sell all its home Tests to a satellite channel, even if it was the highest bidder. What the Board requires is the freedom to trade. As ITV and Channels Four and Five are presently considered "most unlikely" to bid for Test cricket, the BBC would be left in a de facto monopoly, able to secure the rights at a fraction of their market value.

This could have a disastrous effect on the game's finances at a time when the Board has identified the need to spend £150 million improving its first-class grounds and £187 million funding the recreational game.

The ECB is basing its hopes around the secretary of state's pledge to consider "the impact of listing in reducing the income or potential income of the sport and the consequences of that reduction". Only cricket can make a serious plea in that regard.

West Indies squad: B Lara, C Hooper, S Chandee, S Williams, G Chanderpaul, J Adams, D Williams, C Anderson, I Bishop, C Walsh, F Rose, M Dillon, N McLean.



MacLaurin: warning

Ambrose rumours prompt curt denial

FROM ALAN LEE IN KINGSTON

WEST Indies' troubled preparations for the imminent series against England were complicated further yesterday. As their selectors gathered in Barbados to choose the side for the first Test at Sabina Park next week, Curtly Ambrose was obliged to issue an angry denial of reports that he had decided to retire.

A Caribbean news agency, using an unnamed "source close to the fast bowler", claimed that Ambrose had written to the West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) stating his intention to retire from international cricket with immediate effect.

Ambrose, 34, who has been considering his future since returning home, injured and unsuccessful, from the recent tour to Pakistan, quickly denounced the reports as "vicious rumours". "I don't know where people get these stories from," he said. "I am getting calls about it from all over the world."

Late yesterday, it was confirmed that Ambrose would play in the first Test, when he was named in a 13-man squad that included six fast bowlers, but no specialist spinner.

If Ambrose is, indeed, committed to playing on, such speculation refocused attention on him at a time when the selectors may have been looking towards younger bowlers.

Wes Hall, the chairman of selectors, spoke to Ambrose on Monday, and Brian Lara, the new captain, publicly stated his support for him before leaving Trinidad for the selection meeting.

Ambrose has taken 307 wickets in 73 Tests and his enduring, new-ball partnership with Courtney Walsh remains central to West Indian strategy.

Once Walsh had ended uncertainty over his own plans last week (and made bridge-building comments on his previously unhappy relationship with Lara), it was widely assumed that Ambrose would follow suit.

His back injury has healed, but his form remains patchy. In Barbados, he took only one wicket in two Test appearances, and he has bowled unspectacularly in two games for the Leeward Islands recently.

Yesterday, however, he said: "Only I will know when to call it quits and I feel I am standing strong. When you are Curtly Ambrose you set your standards high and when you are not doing so well, people start to talk. But I am not done yet."

Rejected Cork still longs to serve

Derbyshire's new captain tells Richard Hobson of his frustration



DAVID CORK

ANGER burns within David Cork. It is the anger of a proud man feeling slighted at being denied the opportunity to perform on what he feels is his rightful stage. Cork expected to spend the winter with England in the West Indies. Instead, he is working in the small office at the County Ground that houses Derbyshire's commercial department.

"When do you think I would rather be?" Cork asks rhetorically, peering out of the window as rain continues to team down. Time has failed to salve a sense of rejection that stretches beyond simple disappointment.

He will not fly out to watch any of the series, which begins in Jamaica next week. If he watches on television, then it will only be for the occasional half-hour. Any more would only serve to heighten his sense of frustration.

"The selectors said some nice things about me when the squads were announced," Cork said. "But when you cut through all of that, the fact is that I have been left out or dropped, call it what you will, because they do not think I can do the job as well as other people at this particular time. That hurts my pride."

Whatever Geoff Boycott writes in his newspaper column, I have a lot of friends in the England dressing-room and I want to be out there with them."

Failure to win selection came at the end of the most miserable period Cork has endured in cricket. It began last winter when he pulled out of the England tour to Zimbabwe following the breakdown of his marriage. He then struggled to produce his best form when he joined the party in New Zealand. He wonders now whether it might not have been better for him to have remained at home.

On returning to Derbyshire, he pulled up in the game against Kent in April with a groin injury that assumed a disproportionate significance when interminable squabbling began to spread through the club. Dean Jones, the captain, and Les Stilleman, the coach were openly sceptical about the extent of the problem; in fact it proved serious but more than two months passed before Cork had surgery. He returned, unspectacularly, for just five first-class fixtures.



Cork, in his pomp, sends another batsman packing

The case for his selection for the tour was based almost entirely on his performances against West Indies in 1995. He took 25 wickets in five Tests, returned figures of seven for 43 — the best by an England player on debut at Lord's — and performed the hat-trick at Old Trafford. "I was unfit at the end of last season but I thought my record would hold me in good stead," Cork said.

The captaincy of Derbyshire, though chumpily bestowed at the end of a season

of middle and strife, offers him a new focus. Yet Cork will always aspire beyond the county treadmill.

"I would not hang around if I did not think I was good enough to play for England, if I did not think I would play in the big matches again," he said.

"Without that level of personal ambition, I do not see how anybody can give their best in county cricket anyway. Next season I want a team of players who are committed to Derbyshire and all of them striving to play for England, except Saeed Anwar."

The night before, Cork had developed this theme at the county's annual meeting, winning warm applause for a speech embracing honesty, realism, comradeship, humour and hope.

"Last season was disastrous for England and disastrous for me," Cork said candidly. "I think a lot of people are wondering how I will respond. But things happen in life to everybody, but most people do not see them publicised. You just have to be that bit stronger to put all of the problems behind you."

The alternative is to sulk and give up, and I will never do that.

"When everything went right for me against West Indies I hoped it would be as good as that all the time. I appreciate now that every player has lulls in his career. I think I have matured a lot. Leading Derbyshire is a great challenge as well as a big responsibility."

Such words echo those of Brian Lara in accepting the captaincy of the West Indies. Cork, consistently, believes this could herald a revival in the form of his most difficult opponent three years ago. He believes the series will hinge on whether Walsh and Ambrose can combine effectively for one last hurrah.

"It will not be the pushover some people think," he said. "But I agree this is our best chance to beat them for years and that makes it even more frustrating for me being over here. I am not on standby, but I am fit and if Mr Graveney or Mr Gooch or Mr Gatting or Mr Lloyd or Mr Atherton want me, they know where I am. I can be out there by tomorrow."

SPORT IN BRIEF

Guidance system for coach

ICE HOCKEY: The British Ice Hockey Association (BIHA) has decided to appoint a five-man committee, to include Fred Meredith, the president, to guide Peter Woods, the national coach, who has previously had sole responsibility for team selection and has been criticised for playing too many Canadians. Asked how he felt about the decision, Wood said: "The people concerned all have a passion for the sport and our best interests at heart. I will continue to pick the players I think will give us the best chance to win. That has always been my philosophy."

SKIING: Hermann Maier's eagerness to show off his sponsored skills to the TV cameras has cost the Austrian a World Cup victory. Maier, 25, whipped off a ski after a giant slalom race at Val d'Isère in December before reaching the authorised finish zone. His appeal against disqualification has been rejected.

OLYMPIC GAMES: Organisers of the Sydney 2000 Olympics will increase their drug-testing budget following the furore over the attempt by a Chinese swimmer to smuggle illegal growth hormones in the country before the world championships in Perth.

England gain measure of control

By OUR SPORTS STAFF

ENGLAND A kept their composure in the intense heat of Colombo yesterday to emerge in a strong position after the second day of their three-day match against a Sri Lanka Colts XI.

The discipline drummed into the inexperienced squad by Graham Gooch, the manager, Mike Gatting, the coach, and Nick Knight, the captain, enabled them to stay patient when they clearly felt that umpiring decisions were going against them.

After adding 11 runs to their overnight 373 for nine, England laboured long and hard on their first day in the field, on this leg of the tour to reduce the Colts to 208 for eight, 27 runs away from avoiding the follow-on.

James Ormond, of Leicestershire, Ben Hollisake, of Surrey, and Dougie Brown, of Surrey, the seam bowlers, gave England an excellent start by claiming a wicket each in the opening 15 overs. However, their resolve was tested as Fernando, and Mendis added 120 and survived numerous appeals.

SCOREBOARD

Table with 2 columns: ENGLAND A: First Innings, SRI LANKA COLTS XI: First Innings. Lists players and scores.

BOWLS

Table with 2 columns: ENGLAND A: First Innings, SRI LANKA COLTS XI: First Innings. Lists bowlers and wickets.

Wales pair burn to victory on new carpet

By DAVID RHYNS JONES

A CHANGE of underlay speeded up the rink at the Preston Guild Hall overnight and cured a couple of minor irregularities — but not to the approval of Mike Galloway and Rowan Brassey, of New Zealand, who lost in straight sets in the first round of the Saga world indoor pairs championship yesterday.

Steve Rees and John Price, who won 7-5, 7-5, 7-3, praised the surface which, they said, ran at a similar speed to their home club's carpet at Swansea. Several players had complained about the rink in practice, and the underlay was replaced with a lighter one after the Professional Bowls Association asked the tournament director, Gordon Dunwoodie, to investigate. Brassey claimed that he had wasted a week's practice, after psyching himself up for a heavier green. "I assumed the rink would play like it did last October, and left my straighter-running bowls at

home," he said. "Although it was a bit slow, there was nothing wrong with the rink in the first place. Suddenly, it was running two seconds faster. In my opinion, the event should have been stopped so that we could have further practice."

Brassey actually played well, and the Welsh pair were flattered by their victory. Rees and Price scored doubles to break 5-5 deadlocks in the first two sets and, in the last set, ten shots were scored in eight ends. David Gourlay and Hugh Duff, the 1996 and 1997 world indoor singles champions, combined to beat their fellow Scots, Alex Ross and Alex Marshall, 7-1, 7-1, 7-4, 2-7, 7-1. Marshall, still smarting at losing his place as Richard Cordie's partner — a decision taken by the World Indoor Bowls Council last year — had

qualified the hard way by winning the Scottish two-bowl pairs title. Having partnered Cordie to the world title, indoors and out, Marshall was eager to prove that he had lost none of his skill. He was unlucky early in the deciding set, and was devastated to lose a cheap, but decisive, four on the last end. Jean Baker, of Derbyshire, has been selected to play for England in the singles in the Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur next September. Mary Price, who was favourite for the singles berth after winning the Atlantic Rim singles title in Wales last year, will skip the England pair, with Katherine Hawes at lead. Two young players from Huntingdonshire, Mandy Jacklin and Catherine Anton, will support Durham's Norma Shaw in the fours, with Shirley Page, from Hertfordshire, slotting in at second.

TEAMS: Singles, J Baker (Derbyshire), Peter K Hawes (Oxford) and M Price (Sussex). Fours, M Jacklin (Hants), S Page (Herts), C Anton (Hants), N Shaw (Durham).

Advertisement for The Macallan International Bridge Pairs Championship 1998. Includes text about the event, ticket prices, and a bottle of Macallan whisky.

هكذا من الامل

Briton must learn lessons of Australian Open defeat



Henman, struggling to find any sort of form, feels the heat as the effect of his marathon struggle with Golmard takes its toll. Photograph: David Gray

Henman stands at crossroads

IF TIM HENMAN is ever to fulfil his prodigious talent, his defeat in the Australian Open here yesterday must serve as a watershed. He must confront some minor problems in technique, but, more urgently, he must absorb the simple tenet that lapses in concentration will forever exclude him from the highest corridors.

Henman was utterly bereft of explanations after Jerome Golmard, a qualifier ranked No 101 in the world, had humbled the Briton 6-3, 6-7, 6-2, 3-6, 1-9. He spoke in general terms, branding his standard of play "unacceptable" within his "worst performance ever". One had the impression that he had just taken six of the best without quite knowing why.

The ineptness into this defeat will linger like a bad smell for many days to come. The usual suspects were evident: Henman's service was erratic for the first three sets, his groundstrokes alternated between the sublime and the ridiculous and his footwork, particularly in respect of high, backhand volleys, was cumbersome in the extreme. Yet, if Henman wants to cut to the quick, he must surely dwell on the most painful memory within the 19min of his "horror movie" — the very last game of the match.

At the start of the fourth set, Henman had shored up his service in two key respects. He stopped trying to pulp the ball

Julian Muscat, tennis correspondent, reports from Melbourne on mixed fortunes in the men's first round

in favour of raising his first-service percentage and he stopped serving to Golmard's heavy forehand. The tactic worked: he won 14 successive service games, having suffered five breaks in the previous 15.

Then, when trailing 9-10 in the deciding set, Henman was detained for five minutes while Golmard received treatment for badly-blistered feet. That delay snapped Henman's concentration. On resuming, he directed a service straight at Golmard's apocalyptic forehand — and was passed with venom as he approached the net. At 15-30, he made the same mistake, effectively to seal his demise.

Henman's folly demonstrated that he had failed to learn from a near-calamitous misjudgment earlier in the set, when another service to Golmard's forehand met with the same fate. It gave his opponent two match points: Henman was fortunate to survive, producing a winning drop half-volley from the frame of his racket on the second of them.

Contrary to the public's perception, these lapses are not new. Perhaps that is why David Felgate, Henman's coach, looked animated when



Rusudski: took chances

the crowd indulged in a series of Mexican waves as the contest reached its climax. Such raucous encouragement induces Henman to play on his wits, to play the gallery instead of his opponent. It is a dangerous pastime.

The ashes of this defeat also offer an opportunity to dismiss a myth presently surrounding Henman. It is said that he can serve his way out of trouble almost at will. He can also serve his way into it. Among his ten double faults, his first, when 0-30 in the seventh game, effectively cost him the opening set. In the second, when 0-1 and deuce, he delivered his third and fourth

consecutively to giftwrap another break. His sixth put him break-point down in the opening game of the fourth set. Golmard, for his part, served just three double faults in the entire match.

This reverse marks the fourth time in the past five grand slams that Henman has exited with a whimper. He lost abjectly to Wayne Ferreira in New York after downing Thomas Muster, the No 2 seed. It was a similar story at Wimbledon, when, having ousted Richard Krajicek, the defending champion, he was devoured by Michael Stich in straight sets. Likewise his defeat by Michael Chang in the third round here 12 months ago.

Henman's shocked expression in defeat indicated that some of these inadequacies had registered. "I couldn't have made life any more difficult for myself," he said. "If I'm going to be any good at this game, there is no way I can play like that." But, within the immediate wreckage, it was clear that his concentration lapse had not made its mark. "I think [the loss] relates to the practice court," he said. "I've got to practise for longer periods at a higher intensity level. If you have done it in

practice, you will be able to do it in matches."

Greg Rusedski, by contrast, can never be faulted for mental diligence. He was never likely to lose to another qualifier in the shape of David Witt, world ranked No 206. Menace oozed from Rusedski's game as he lashed down 27 aces in his 7-6, 6-3, 6-4 victory. He was also clinical in taking his chances, converting a single opportunity to break in each of the second and third sets.

Rusedski, seeded No 5, plays Jonathan Stark tomorrow, whom he mastered 11-9 in the fifth set of their lengthy, 190-minute, 1997 Wimbledon confrontation at Wimbledon. "It will be a big-serving match," Rusedski forecast. "so I'll have to be sharp on my returns. I am going in with a lot of confidence and serving well, which is a good sign."

The only two seeds to perish yesterday were Muster, seeded No 8, and Goran Ivanisevic, who refused to acknowledge Rudi Federer, the umpire, after losing to Jan Siemerink of Holland, in four sets. Seeded No 13, Ivanisevic was officially rebuked for talking too long between changing ends. So black was his mood that he stormed away from Melbourne Park without attending the post-match conference — as he did after his equally surprising defeat by Magnus Norman at Wimbledon in June.

Results, page 38

Sailor sought a year early

WIGAN Warriors are hoping to sign Wendell Sailor, the exciting Australia wing, in time for the new Super League season. Sailor is not due to take up a two-year £500,000 contract at Central Park until next year, but Phil Clark, the former Great Britain captain and a new Wigan director, has been sent to Australia to try to secure his early release.

Wigan are apparently willing to pay Brisbane £200,000 in compensation to let him go. Mike Nolan, the Wigan chairman, said: "We want Phil on the spot if Brisbane decide to

let Wendell come here immediately. We would be delighted to have him on our side for the opening Super League match here, against Castleford Tigers on April 5."

Sailor, 23, agreed personal terms with Wigan two weeks ago. On his return home, Brisbane reminded him of a two-year option on his services, which they intended to invoke, and banned him from training. Should he join Wigan, Sailor would forego numerous off-field deals, sacrific

his international career in the medium term and possibly miss the new season in Australia.

Robbie Paul, who led Bradford Bulls to the Super League title last year but whose form was variable by his standards, has been replaced as club captain by Graeme Bradley, the veteran Australian back.

Via Manautia will miss the first three months of the season for St Helens. The Western Samoa forward broke his left arm for the second time in four months in a warm-up match on Sunday.

London Broncos, who have recruited extensively from Australia and New Zealand, will field their new-look combination against the Combined Services at the United Services ground, Portsmouth, on January 31.

Answers from page 33

CRUCK (a) One of a pair of curved timbers, forming with other pairs the framework of a timber house. A variant of crook and crook.

ANGEKOK (a) An Eskimo sorcerer or medicine-man. The Alaskan word, Kipling, *The Second Jungle Book*, 1892: "The angekok, the sorcerer, frightened them into the most delightful fit."

GARAMOND (a) Any of a class of typefaces set by Garamond or based on his design or that of Jean Garamond. An acronym of *Classique Garamond* (fined 156), a French typefounder. "The usual Roman letters of this skillful engraver because technically known, not only in France, but in other countries, as Garamond type."

CANOT (a) The French word for canoe, used in certain French phrases relating to the Canadian fur trade. For example, *canot de natte* is the largest canoe of the fur trade, up to 40 feet long and carrying a cargo of 4 to 5 tons, formerly used especially on the Great Lakes and St Lawrence. *Canot de nord* is a canoe about 25 feet long.

Sailor: two-year contract

Davis holds no fear for young Hunter

IN THE 1980s, Steve Davis was an odds-on favourite for most tournaments before a ball had been struck. It is a sign of the times that the former world champion was not even favoured to beat Paul Hunter in the Regal Welsh Open at Newport yesterday.

As they do on the majority of occasions, the bookmakers had their finger on the pulse. Hunter, reaching the last 16 with a 5-3 victory. Most illuminating of all, Davis described his performance as the best he has produced in a ranking event this season.

"I've been disheartened with my form in practice and in matches for quite some time now," Davis, who has struggled since capturing the 172nd title of his career at an invitation event in China last September, said.

"Watching a slow-motion replay of my cue action a couple of weeks ago, I realised things weren't right. Since then, I've made a few alterations. In some respects I'm trying to mimic the way Ronnie O'Sullivan delivers the cue and I've started to make a bit of progress. Frustration has been replaced by optimism."

Davis, 40, led his teenage rival 2-1, but Hunter, who

reached the semi-finals of the Welsh Open in 1996 only four months after celebrating his seventeenth birthday, won the next three frames in rapid succession.

"I was a bit nervous before the start, but once I'd got a frame under my belt I knew I could beat him," Hunter, who sealed victory with a nerveless long blue in the eighth frame, said. It was further proof, if it were needed, that the aura of invincibility that once cloaked Davis has long since disappeared.

Davis was impressed by Hunter's maturity. "I think the jury has to be out on any player until he wins a tournament or two, but Paul certainly deserves his label as a strong prospect," he said. "He knows what he's doing around the table and he ends confidence."

John Parrott, who suggested a return to something approaching his best by betting into the German Open final last month, beat Ian McCulloch 5-1. Alan McManis, who whitewashed Joe Johnson in the previous round, enjoyed another untroubled passage. This time, he defeated Martin Dine-wialtowski, a fellow Scot, 5-1.

Results, page 38

Living to tell the tale

Survivor Channel 5, 8.00pm In 1955 four Britons set out on an 8,000-mile journey across the Sahara desert in a Morris Minor Traveller. They were led by Alan Cooper, a farmer in Kenya. He had crossed the Sahara by car before and arrogantly ignored such basic precautions as carrying enough water. Even worse, the car failed its safety inspection at the border point. Cooper not only disobeyed the direction to turn back but failed to tell the others, two women and a boy of 17. That the expedition ended tragically makes it an odd entry for a series about the human capacity to survive in extreme conditions. The car can be said for a more recent desert tragedy involving a British family on holiday in Tunisia. But for those still not dissuaded from attempting such journeys, there are helpful hints on how to cope with the desert temperatures.

The Force BBC2, 9.50pm The last time BBC cameras observed the Thames Valley Police they revealed some far from flattering behaviour, most notoriously towards an alleged rape victim. But time and the police have moved on and today the Thames Valley force is regarded as a model by no less than the Home Secretary, Jack Straw. This does not mean it is above criticism as the opening film in this series shows. For 30 years, Chris Brown, an Oxfordshire farmer, has bred cats for animal testing. The business is legitimate but animal rights protesters are trying to close it down. The police are caught in the middle, determined to maintain law and order. But the operation is a huge drain on officers and it wins no plaudits from the protesters who accuse the police of being the farmer's private security force.

Prostitute BBC1, 10.45pm Talia, a 32-year-old who speaks four languages and had a responsible job in the airline industry, may be an unlikely recruit for the oldest profession. But, as she tells Esther Rantzen in the first of a four-part series, she was made redundant, the bills were piling up and, as a single parent, she needed to keep herself and her three young



Talia turned to prostitution (BBC1, 10.45pm)

children. Psychologists will no doubt put it down to a bad childhood. Talia barely knew her father and her mother showed her no love. Worse, she was sexually abused by a person close to the family between the ages of ten and 16. Even now she sleeps with the light on. Selling her body, she reckons, gave her control and self-esteem. She has now left prostitution for pornographic films. But she intends to stop as soon as she can afford to and would not advise anyone else to do it, certainly not her own daughter.

The Mark Thomas Comedy Product Channel 4, 11.00pm

As a comedian Mark Thomas is by no means to everybody's taste, as the late scheduling for his show acknowledges. But his humour, while hardly polite, can be pressed into very worthwhile service, as in his exposé last year for *Dispatches* of how owners of historic houses are evading a tax law. Some of his stunts for the last series of the *Comedy Product* also made a serious point in jocular terms, such as exporting a military tank to the Middle East disguised as an ice-cream van. In this new series he takes a float in the Lord Mayor's Show with Nick Lessey and Robert Maxwell looking for work in his food chain and digs into the past of a public figure. These antics are intercut with Thomas's stage-up routines, which are recorded shortly before transmission to ensure topicality. Peter Waymark

RADIO CHOICE

Sounds Stories Radio 3, 11.00am

This week Richard Baker's series has been concentrating on musical relationships, starting with Robert Schumann and Clara Wieck on Monday and continuing with Richard and Costas Wagner yesterday. Today the focus is on Frederick Chopin and George Sand, the somewhat fiery single mother whose relationship with Chopin could safely be described as having its ups and downs. They spent the winter of 1838-39 together in Majorca, a town which brought out many tensions between them but which also offered some inspiration to Chopin, who composed 24 preludes for piano during the visit. The couple subsequently lived together at Sand's home but became estranged in 1847, two years before Chopin died.

Kennedy's Secret Tapes Radio 4, 7.45pm

The continuing fascination of this series about the 1962 Cuban missile crisis lies partly in the way that it probes the old adage about the devil being in the detail, though in this case the drama is in the detail, too. The original tapes are not of broadcast quality so the words on them are spoken by actors, which gives the whole thing an even greater resonance. It has been striking how quickly Kennedy came to the conclusion that the world had to launch an attack on Cuba, a decision later rescinded. This second part demonstrates that as the face-off with the Soviet Union continued, the tension in the White House became almost palpable, but that only serves to emphasise what a cool operator Kennedy was. Peter Barnard

World Service

6.00am Newsday 6.30 Europe Today 7.00 News 7.15 Off the Shelf: A Night to Remember 7.30 Meridian Line 8.00 News 8.15 Past and Present 8.30 Performance 8.30 Eyewitness 8.00 News 9.00 News in German (6.45 only) 9.05 World Business Report 9.15 The Evening World 9.30 Britain Now 9.45 Sports Roundup 10.00 Newsday 10.30 One Planet 11.00 Newsday 11.30 Sports International 12.00 Newsday 12.05 World Business Report 12.15 Britain Today 12.30 Waveguide 12.45 Sports Roundup 1.00 Newsday 2.00 News 2.05 Outlook 2.30 Magazines 3.00 News in German (8.45 only) 3.05 Sports Roundup 4.15 Performance 4.30 Eyewitness 4.00 News 4.15 From Our Own Correspondents 4.30 The World Today: News in German (8.45 only) 4.45 Britain Today 5.00 Europe Today 5.30 World Business Report 5.45 Sports Roundup 6.00 Newsday 6.30 The World: News in German (8.45 only) 7.00 News 7.15 Off the Shelf: A Night to Remember 7.30 Meridian Line 8.00 News 8.15 Past and Present 8.30 Performance 8.30 Eyewitness 8.00 News 9.00 News in German 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